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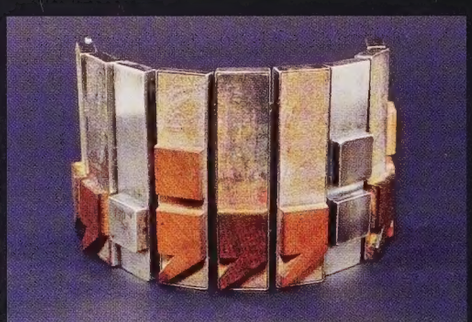

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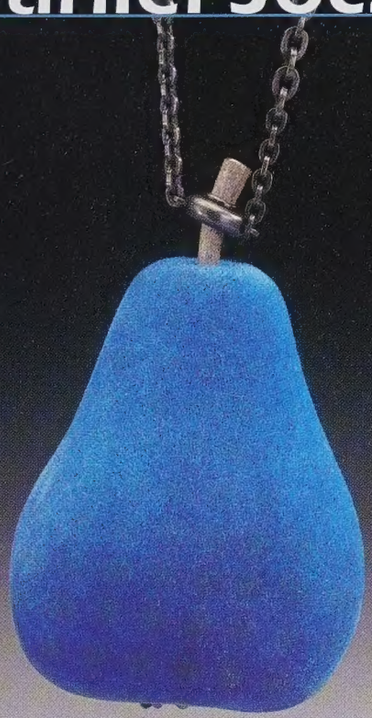

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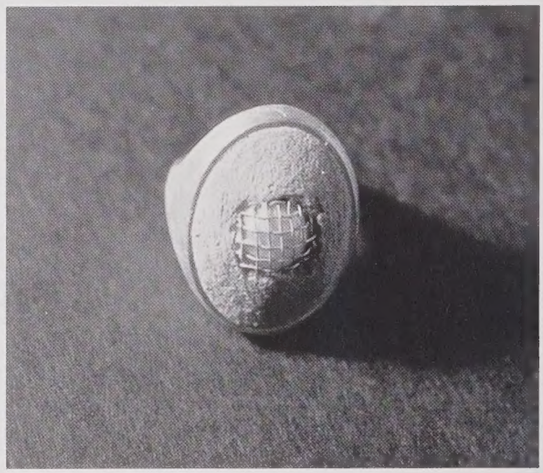

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Heather White, *Vis-a-Vis*. 1999. brooch, 18K, ss, pearls, velvet

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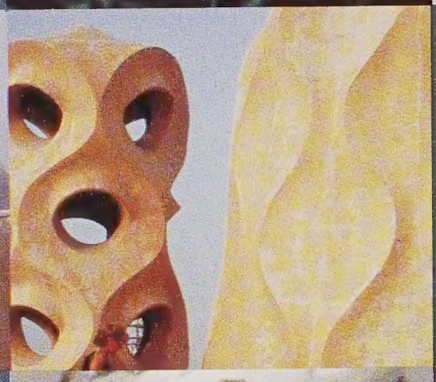

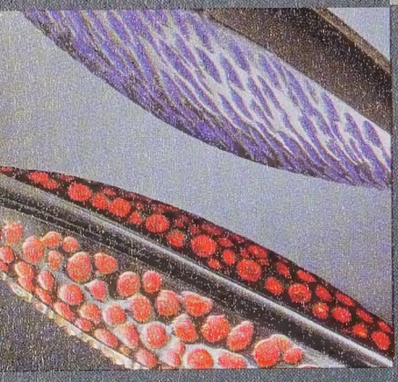

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Biba Schutz
Ceremonial Pendant, 1998
copper, sterling, fine silver
$4\frac{3}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$"
Photograph by Ron Boszko

top left
Helen Drutt
Helen Drutt, Philadelphia
May 10, 1986

top right
Biba Schutz
Primary Cuff, 1991
sterling, fine silver
$3\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{4} \times 2$"
Photograph by Ron Boszko

middle left
David Gignac
Nomad, 1998
forged and fabricated steel
48 x 24 x 14"

middle right
Bruce Metcalf
Roof of the Casa Mila
Photograph by Bruce Metcalf

bottom left
d. h. Ostrander
Pod Pins (brooches), 1999
black marble, 14k, 18k, sterling, acrylic paint
$2 \times \frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{2}$"
Photograph by Bill Truslow

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FROM THE EDITOR

FRANK LEWIS

How can one not address the controversy between the mayor of New York and the Brooklyn Museum of Art? In all of the brouhaha over the mayor's decision to rescind public funding from the museum I read more than one commentary that argued the following: "while the Mayor may have over-reacted, it is clear that in the case of the *Sensations* exhibition the work shown did not deserve such attention because it was clearly not of timeless and universal quality." This argument allows a general defense of freedom of expression, while at the same time making clear distinctions between works that deserve such freedoms and other works that should be weeded out long before they reach a public venue. One notable proponent of this position, a rather patrician acting director of a major New York museum, suggested that, of course, a perceptive curator would have exercised more aesthetic judgement and thus the controversy would have been avoided.

At first reading this argument sounds so reasonable and civilized. The implications of this position are, however, disturbing. Put another way, it seems that while it is unacceptable for the Mayor to refuse a venue for a work, it is quite proper for curators to exercise such control. Are we to assume that the Mayor's motivation was crass political opportunism, while a proper curator, on the other hand, always acts above politics? Do we trust curators to censor because their arts-related education has afforded them an infallible eye for quality and timelessness? Many would say yes. What this notion fails to take into account is the ever-changing notion of beauty and quality. Anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of the history of art knows that before the nineteenth century, even the ranking of the greatest artists were constantly ascending and descending according to the popular tastes of the time. A graph of Rembrandt's reputation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would look like a chart of a volatile internet stock. Alone among artists, Michelangelo is probably the only artist in the history of western art who has more or less maintained an uncontested status.

Undoubtedly exposure, education, and a carefully nurtured critical position do assist curators, gallery directors, and even editors in their choice of works to feature and expose. But as society becomes increasingly diverse and as alternative attitudes and approaches seek an outlet it seems to me that it is untenable to maintain that the best work will rise to the top through a consensus of professionals. Like it or not, "the best" always excludes somebody or something that needs to heard and/or seen. The *best* crafted object and the most powerfully experienced object, for instance, are not always compatible. Both criteria raise legitimate issues and in rare cases maybe we can locate such concerns in a single work, but even then what of other equally legitimate questions such as those related to iconography, cultural relevance, marketability and design, to name a few?

I haven't seen the painting that inspired so much attention. A reproduction in the newspaper failed to impress me. But as far as I am concerned the issues that it raises, even if I judge it a bad work of art, are worth the small percentage of my tax dollars that would go to support the exhibition. We need to think of freedom of expression and art that we may not judge to be the best, not as an embrace of controversy and outrageousness for its own sake but rather as the opportunity to make sure that the vested interest of *tastemakers* and politicians are not the only interests that reach a public forum. ■

FCL

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Editor Frank C. Lewis
Graphic Design Catherine Jacobi, Ted Studios, Inc.
Copy Editor Sarah Sharpe
Technical Editor John Cogswell
Production Coordinator Dana Singer
Contributing Editor Bruce Metcalf

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Executive Director
Dana Singer
2275 Amigo Drive
Missoula, Montana 59808
(406) 728 -5248 FAX (406) 728-2729
DSinger@SNAGmetalsmith.org

Advertising
Dana Singer
2275 Amigo Drive
Missoula, Montana 59808
(406) 728 -5248 FAX (406) 728-2729
DSinger@SNAGmetalsmith.org

Editorial Materials
Frank C. Lewis, Editor
Metalsmith
2755 North Murray Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53211
(414) 332-6375

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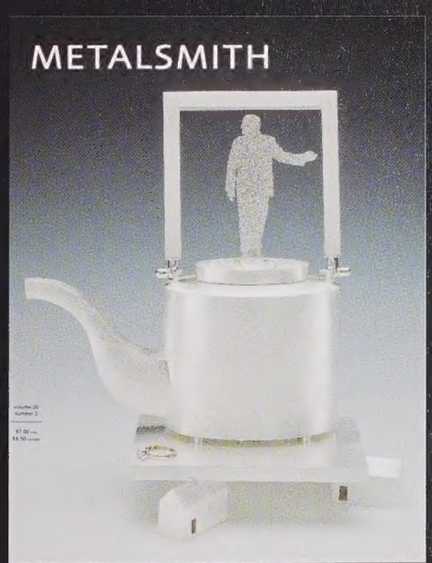

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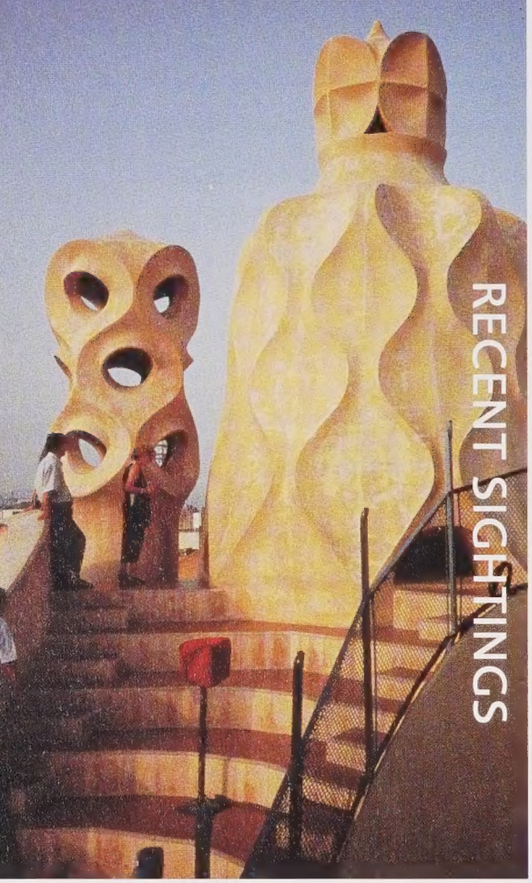

RECENT SIGHTINGS

MEDITATION ON A ROOFTOP

BRUCE METCALF

Last summer, I saw the architecture of Antonio Gaudi in Barcelona. Gaudi has been my hero for a long time, so it was interesting to finally see the real things: the Church of the Sagrada Familia, the Casa Batlló, the Casa Mila. Some were disappointments: the Sagrada Familia has a new West facade covered with dreadful sculpture. It almost made me sick. But the Casa Mila was entirely magical. It has been almost completely restored, and both the attic and the roof are open to the public.

It was the roof that thrilled me the most. The roof undulates, getting higher as the building underneath gets wider, and it's populated with chimneys and pavilions that are wholly unlike anything ever built before. You've probably seen the pictures, but being there is even better. I sat in the afternoon sun and watched those extraordinary forms. They are wildly inventive, but also perfectly functional. It's hard enough to invent a new form, and its even more difficult to make it work. It was Gaudi's genius to be capable of both.

I sat there and thought about creativity. Curiously, it's a word that art professionals almost never use. The literature on Gaudi calls the Casa Mila roof "truly original," "humorous," and even "bizarre." But, as is typical of art writing of the past thirty years, Gaudi's undeniable creativity is rarely mentioned.

Perhaps the problem is that creativity is confused with emoting. This confusion may be a legacy of abstract expressionism: Pollock's drips and De Kooning's smears look so easy to imitate, and the public assumes that flinging and splashing paint must be the proper way to express powerful feelings. Isn't it creative? Generations of art students have made that exact assumption, so the world is periodically flooded with piles of brushy paintings intended to communicate alienation and despair. There's only one problem: this kind of art is often formulaic and devoid of genuine creativity. It's like scream therapy: you can emote all you like, but it ain't necessarily good art. It gives creativity a bad name.

Personally, I think real creativity is hard to come by and very difficult to sustain. Students can occasionally produce fresh and original artwork, but how many of those students can keep it up year after year? This field, jewelry and metalsmithing, has plenty of new talent, but how many jewelers and metalsmiths continue to make innovative work once they reach their fifties or their sixties? The majority of our senior stars (and I won't name names here) arrive at a comfortable formula that they repeat with small variations for years. Actually, that's OK. But those artists who continue to change and grow and make innovative work are few and far between. (Gaudi stopped working on the Casa Mila when he was 57.)

The educational psychologist Howard Gardner recently offered a good definition of creativity. He says that creativity is the process of "affecting the practices in a domain or our conception of a domain."[1] A domain is "any organized activity in a society where you can rank people in terms of expertise." Thus, to Gardner, creativity can't consist in simply doing things well, as in learning to play the piano well. Such craftsmanship follows the rules and alters nothing. The domain, the framework in which expert performance is judged, continues as before. According to Gardner, true creativity must bring about a change in the artists' surroundings.

Gardner lists three preconditions for affecting a domain. First, you have to be strongly motivated, because real innovation is usually rejected when it first appears. In other words, you have to be ambitious. Second, you have to learn the history of the domain. As Gardner says, "You can't go on to do something new unless you know what's been done before." And third, he says that you have to know about the people who influence the field. Gardner admits this is hard to swallow, but he points out that innovations have to be brought to the attention of the powerful people in a field. Gardner simply admits that every field is a network of human relationships, and who you know is just as important as what you know.

Gardner adds that creativity requires paying attention to aberrations. He says, "The roots of innovation lie in taking seriously and developing something which nobody else has paid attention to and which you and the rest of the universe might be inclined to ignore." What first looks like a mistake can be the seed of a great discovery.

Obviously, one can object to details of Gardner's idea. Some innovations do not occur within domains like folk art, which once had no category of its own but go on to exert great influence. And sometimes great ideas exert no influence at all. But I think Gardner's idea of affecting a domain is very useful. The difficult and sustained creativity I talked about will often affect a field. Our idea of what constitutes expertise may be changed as a result.

Maybe Gaudi didn't alter the field of architecture very much. But maybe he did. Before I visited Barcelona, I saw Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, and there were echoes in the new building of Gaudi's fluid and unpredictable forms. For me, Gaudi has always shown how real creativity looks. I sat on the Casa Mila roof and admired all those astonishing shapes. I thought about how I have tried to dedicate myself to the life of the imagination, and here I was, face to face with a brilliantly imaginative work. Gaudi sure as hell changed my domain, because he has taught me that a good part of the expertise of art is imagination. And that's enough for me. ■

Photograph of roof of the Casa Mila taken by the author.

Bruce Metcalf is a jeweler and occasional writer who lives in Philadelphia.

[1] "Keeping the Arts in Mind and the Mind on the Arts, " Michael Kimmelman interview with Howard Gardner, *New York Times*, Sunday 14 February 1999. All subsequent quotes are taken from this article.

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If you have any questions about registration please call: Jeanette Helfrich or Liz Lenard at 630-579-3272.

If you have any questions about the conference please call Conference Co-Chairs: Beth Ann Gerstein at 617-266-1810, or Claire Sanford at 978-282-9531, or Confernece Coordinator: Paulette Werger at 603-433-0306

All information is subject to change without notice.

DISPLAY CASE

d. h. OSTRANDER

I am interested in the combination of materials both precious and ordinary, such as sandstone and pearl, opal and onyx, and marble and paint. I cut many of my own stones or alter ones I buy to fit my purposes.

I intend my work to reflect the natural world, either outwardly or as an expression of the inner relationship of form and structure.

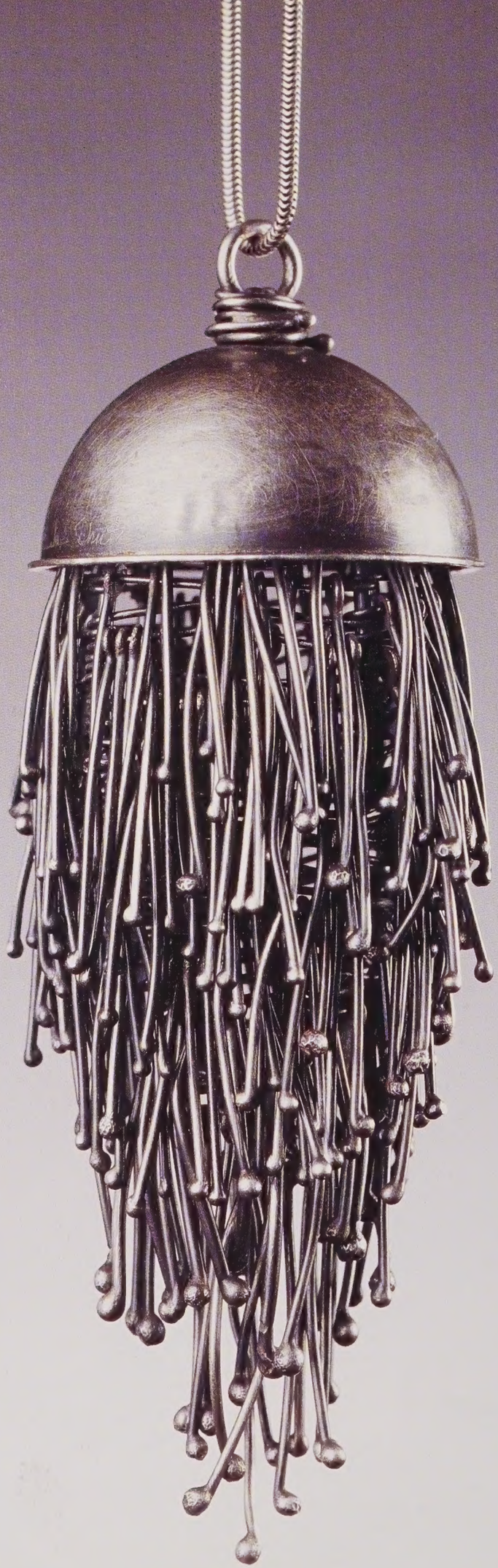
opposite page
Pod Pins (brooches), 1999
black marble, 14k, 18k, sterling, acrylic paint
2 x 1/2 x 1/2"
Photograph by Bill Truslow

top
Middle Ground (pendant), 1995
dumorterite, 18k
2 x 1 5/8 x 1/2"
Photograph by Bill Truslow

left
Oriental Vision, 1994
boulder opal, black onyx, 24k, 18k
1 3/4 x 1 x 1/4"
Photograph by Bill Truslow

above
My Tongue's on Fire (brooch), 1998
sterling, Montana agate, 14k
3 1/2 x 1 x 3/8"

BIBA SCHUTZ: OPEN SPACES OF JEWELRY'S EXPERIENCE



this page
Warrior I, 1994
sterling, fine silver
Photograph by Ron Boszko
Collection of Anne Durand

opposite page
Pistil, 1999
bronze, sterling, fine silver
2 1/2 x 2 1/2 x 1"
Photograph by Ron Boszko

text by **TACEY ROSOLOWSKI**

"I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO BE INSIDE ONE OF MY OWN PIECES,"

BIBA SCHUTZ SAYS. The open fretwork characteristic of her brooches and pendants extends the invitation to the viewer as well. Fabricated wire of copper, bronze, or fine silver sculpts a space that the eye can penetrate. Take the example of *Primary Cuff* -- primitive, even primordial in appearance. Front, interior, and back surfaces interact, drawing the eye into a drama of shifting curves. Diffuse reflections, changes in light and shadow, combinations of metals, and contrasting textures intensify the play of surface and depth.

WHATEVER **THE IMAGINATION CONJURES** WHEN THE EYE PLAYS THROUGH WRAPPED WIRE, TIME INHABITS EACH SURFACE, HOLLOW, AND SHADOW.

The eye refracts the piece, and the imagination unfolds its potential for meaning. *Katydid*, the *Woods* brooches, *Primary Cuff* -- each seems to emerge out of the past. Perhaps each work is an artifact unearthed on an archeological dig, the remains of an ancient plant, or an insect's carapace discovered in a primordial forest. Whatever the imagination conjures when the eye plays through wrapped wire, time inhabits each surface, hollow, and shadow.

"Aesthetics" comes from the Greek word for perception, *aisthesis*. The aesthetic specificity of an art object arises, in part, from the kinds of perceptual awareness it heightens. Jewelry, of course, focuses awareness on both the object and the body. When Schutz expresses her desire to be physi-

left
Seeds II (necklace), 1997
sterling, fine silver
33 x 2 x 2"
Collection of David and Clemmer Montague
Photograph by Ron Boszko

right
Vine Necklace, 1999
sterling, fine silver
26" long
Photograph by Ron Boszko

cally inside one of her pieces, she acknowledges that they subject the body to a specific kind of aesthetic pull. The complex surfaces of *Primary Cuff* draw in the eyes, but the spectacle seduces the viewer into tactile and well as visual exploration. Concave and convex surfaces collapse into one another; the interior ellipse invites a wrist. Such details pleasurably enfold the body and mind in the drama of moment-by-moment perception.

For this reason, the aesthetic specificity of Schutz's work is most accessible through the vocabulary of phenomenology.[1] Phenomenologists investigate how the mind knows objects, though they reject the notion that objects are simply clusters of raw sense data. Instead, the term "phenomenon" refers to an object that is grasped in an integrated act of knowing; one that involves the senses, emotions, intellect, spirit, and body. In other words, the phenomenon is produced when an embodied mind reaches out to activate an object's fullness.[2]

When working in aesthetics, the phenomenologist sees the work of art as more than a passive receiver for the mind. The formal and material elements of a work of art actively guide the viewer's acts of understanding. This creates some degree of awareness on the viewer's part that he or she is bonding with the object. In the case of jewelry, the vehicle will be different for different artists. Color, texture, and cultural or narrative evocation might serve to heighten awareness of this link.[3] What is so provocative about Schutz's work, however, is the way her visual vocabulary works with a conception absolutely central to phenomenology's notion of art: time, or (in more technical terms) temporality.[4] The richness of an art object is not given in a single moment; it unfolds as the beholder and the object come together over a period of dynamic, intimate contact. Time is so central to defining the quality of this interaction that phenomenologists say the work of art possesses an "event-character." By encircling the body, some jewelry objects do invite us physically to come "inside." But much more powerfully, the piece, as a work of art, stages an event that we inhabit imaginally and perceptually.

Biba Schutz's work draws the viewer into an aesthetic event built around four different kinds of time: the temporality of material production, the temporal experience of a sculptural object, expanses of historical time evoked in visual metaphor, and the jewelry object's enduring life as a meaningful object. With these forms of time complexly intertwined, Schutz's work serves as a powerful, even iconic, representation of the jewelry object as a structured work of art.

The temporal richness of Schutz's work begins with the materiality of creative process, and it carries the mark of the varied experience she brings to the craft. Schutz came to metalwork in the 1980s, and she is largely self-taught. During her earlier undergraduate design training at the American University in Washington, DC, and professional study at the Pratt Graphics Center in New York, Schutz specialized in typography and printmaking. "Working with type is about simplicity of line and negative and positive space. I *always* see negative space," she says. She absorbed Modernist values, learning to treat type as a three-dimensional volume. These lessons find their way into her current metalwork: Schutz transposes wire-as-line into three-dimensional, sculptural form.

On graduating, however, Schutz was still years away from discovering metalwork. She worked as a graphic designer, which honed her skills but left her feeling professionally and emotionally constrained. The organizational demands of projects overshadowed the work's creative gratification. She keenly felt a loss of connection when a project left her hands.

In 1969, a show of three-dimensional textiles at the Museum of Modern Art in New York made her realize that she needed more hands-on connection with creative process. In what she now sees as a period of healing, Schutz explored textile craft for a number of years. She travelled repeatedly to Mexico, broadening her cultural perspective and studying weaving and fiber arts at the Instituto de Allende, in San Miguel de Allende.

Schutz's turn to metal came in the early eighties, when she began producing colorful jewelry in anodized aluminum. However, her experiments with fiber had left their mark. "Colored out," and feeling that aluminum controlled her process too strictly (particularly when she attempted aluminum wrapped-wire forms), she eventually switched to more plastic and somber metals -- silver, bronze, and copper. The malleable metals offered her "memory and depth," "a richness and emotional connection that aluminum doesn't give to me." Today, she says, "The way I'm using metal has a textile feel to it. My fabrication process is a kind of sewing." She creates a form by manipulating wire as if it were thread.

THE JEWELRY OBJECT PHYSICALLY RECORDS ITS OWN PROCESS OF CREATION, AND AS THE EYE SHIFTS FROM A VIEW OF THE GESTALT TO IMMEDIATE SCRUTINY OF INDIVIDUAL DETAILS, **THE VIEWER CANNOT HELP BUT ENTER** IMAGINALLY INTO THE MATERIAL PROGRESSION OF PRODUCTION.

Schutz's characteristic idiom of wrapped fiber also manipulates the viewer's aesthetic relationship with her forms. Schutz creates open wire structures that permit the viewer to see evidence of the fabrication process. She uses these details as her dominant visual motifs. Revealing the process "gives the piece a history," she says. The jewelry object physically records its own process of creation, and as the eye shifts from a view of the gestalt to immediate scrutiny of individual details, the viewer cannot help but enter imaginally into the material progression of production. Tactile experience is as important as vision in exploring how one detail reproduces the next in the record of construction: Schutz's pieces beg to be touched. The intersecting planes of wrapped wire in *Corsage Cuff*, for example, register *and* exploit the irregularities in texture created when Schutz shapes her wire. Glimpses of the supporting framework draw the eye into the piece's basic architecture. Schutz adds an explosion of "swimmers," knobbed wire tendrils, for textural and kinetic interest. The eye and hand follow each thread to its point of connection with the cuff. Through this material involvement with production, the viewer is prepared for a second experience of temporality, one filtered through Schutz's sculptural sensibility.

Schutz's feeling for sculptural form is so strong that for some years she could not decide whether to work as a sculptor or a jeweler. Even after settling into her metier, she still creates pieces that can be displayed as autonomous sculptures. When Schutz wants to characterize this aspect of her design vision, she refers to a 1997 exhibition of sculptor Richard Serra's *Torqued Ellipses* at the Dia Art Center in New York.[5] As is so often the case when one artist responds strongly to the work of another, Serra's sculptures touched a chord because he expresses in monumental form fundamental elements of Schutz's own design sensibility.

Each sculpture is made from a ten-foot by sixteen-foot sheet of two-inch steel that is curved into a form much like a cuff bracelet: an elliptical form whose ends don't quite meet, so the viewer can both walk around and inside the sculpture. These works are not simple cylinders, however. The upper and lower ellipses, rather than sitting directly over one another, are offset, so the whole form is torqued. The continual shifts in the angles of the walls treat the viewer to a "guaranteed adrenaline rush," as novelist Lauren Hendersen describes it. Schutz had such a response, and this is precisely what Serra intends. He explains that he wanted to explore the idea of "the body's movement not being predicated totally on image or sight or optical awareness, but on physical awareness in relation to space, time, movement."[6]

It is not surprising that Serra's steel monuments satisfied some of Schutz's yearning to occupy one of her own pieces. For both artists, the body and the sculptural form are not the only two positive spaces involved in aesthetic interaction. The interstitial, "negative" space also takes on form -- palpable and fluid -- and that's what the viewer is aware of as the piece comes into proximity with the body. Schutz's *Torque* brooches, inspired by Serra, evoke this idea symbolically. The brooches are a study of spherical volumes with equivalent circumferences, pierced by torqued elliptical tunnels. She designed the pieces so they might fit inside one another -- evocative of the integrated experience of form that both Serra and she try to capture.

The *Circum Pendant* translates this idea more directly into tactile metaphor. The form fits comfortably in the palm. When fingers close reflexively around it, the object transforms an "empty" space of the body, filling it and creating a focal point for a keen awareness of space. The unique design element, the "circum" (Schutz's term), seems to express the psychic dimensions of this awareness. Touching and looking inside this structure -- a single piece of copper formed into a whorl -- the viewer feels funneled into the piece and its power to make the mind focus inward. At the same time, the spiral also expands outward, reminiscent of the way aesthetic experience engages the wearer with something larger than herself.

Central to this sculptural vision is the counter-intuitive idea that spatial elements are markers of time. Art critic Lynne Cook comments that exploration of Serra's sculptures "links time inextricably with space."[7] Schutz's *Vine* explores this idea in the realm of jewelry art.

Vine represents a departure from her usual approach to sculptural process. Instead of beginning with a form and relating it to the body, she decided to do a neckpiece, and a vine suggested itself. From silver, she fabricated long twigs (about one and a half inches), then attached a series of wrapped-wire pods. Schutz explains that each pod developed its own geometrical logic; the piece "just grew, I didn't really have control over it." As a linked series of spatial elements, the entire piece

CENTRAL TO THIS SCULPTURAL VISION IS THE COUNTER-INTUITIVE IDEA THAT SPATIAL ELEMENTS ARE MARKERS OF TIME.

carries the viewer through the free-flowing temporality of creative process. This idea of space infused with time also describes how the wearer experiences the piece.

Schutz's sense of *Vine's* fluid development fits with her firm belief that "Everything is a series. I make things, and they grow." What grew in this case was a piece with a strong identity. The twigs are sturdy (sometimes stubborn), and though the wearer must cope with this feature, she can also drape the piece about her body in a number of different ways. This flexibility influences the wearer's experience of the piece as an artistic composition. The twig's rigidity contrasts with the pods, which dangle freely and take different configurations as the wearer arranges the piece in different ways. With each wearing, *Vine* can be remade into a slightly different piece. Even if the viewer senses the varying compositional and tactile effects only as fleeting impressions, they form part of the mind's knowledge of this jewelry object. This goes to the heart of understanding the event-character of the work of art -- art embraced as an experience. Knowledge of the piece builds up slowly, over time, as memory adds one experience of the work to the next, layer by layer.

This inner portrait of an art work possesses an archeological richness that does justice to the complex sculptural experiences Schutz orchestrates. Her consistency of interest in temporal expe-

opposite page top
Slice, 1999
18k, sterling, fine silver
3 x 2 1/3 x 3/4"
Photograph by Ron Boszko

opposite page bottom
Woods IV, 1999
copper, sterling, fine silver
4 x 1 1/3 x 1/3"
Collection of Barbara Waldman
Photograph by Ron Boszko

below
Primary Cuff, 1991
sterling, fine silver
3 1/2 x 2 1/4 x 2"
Limited edition
Photograph by Ron Boszko

KNOWLEDGE OF THE PIECE BUILDS UP SLOWLY, OVER TIME, AS MEMORY ADDS ONE EXPERIENCE OF THE WORK TO THE NEXT, LAYER BY LAYER.

rience extends to the visual metaphors on which her jewelry forms are based.

"America doesn't have a long history," Schutz says, and she has developed her keen awareness of the past and other cultures into a visual vocabulary rich with historical resonance. "Even my most abstracted forms are built around a geometry and proportion," she explains, a design sensibility she has drawn from ancient Greek and Etruscan art forms. She is fascinated with the techniques of Japanese armorers, particularly the lacing together of metal plates, another cultural and historical reference for her own technique of sewing with metal. The shapes and materials of the prehistoric past and of tribal craft are equally important influences. Since the beginning of her jewelry experiments, Schutz has worked with a form based on the elongated and pointed African shield. Her design vocabulary embraces biological processes as well: the *Woods* series was inspired by tree rings -- an organic record of historical time. Even more important is the rounded pod or egg form, a symbol of life, growth, and nurturance -- a female essence and origin.

Once again, sequences and series are Schutz's central concepts. Her pieces, with their muted tones and inner structures visible through wrapped wire, suggest time's passage and offer another kind of temporal experience. For Schutz, these objects function as vehicles for symbolic travel. For the viewer, too, one look sweeps the imagination toward a distant past. However, the destinations they suggest are anything but simple.

While Schutz may seem to place her forms in distinct categories, she confirms that they are closely related both visually and conceptually. Her own notion of what a form represents often changes as she works with it. In fact she assigns her forms names purely for convenience. The individual elements of *Vine* are not only floral pods, but also recall forms Schutz has used to construct vessels, insects, and the pieces in her *Warrior* series. Similarly, as Schutz acknowledges, the *Warrior* pieces draw equally on the cultural reference of the shield and the organic notion of the pod and egg. As a result, Schutz's forms and their references seem to "morph" into one another, with great richness of meaning. This fluidity not only gives her forms a contemporary, biomorphic quality. Their ambiguity brings us to the final temporal dimension critical in any work of art -- the temporality implied in the history of a piece's interpretation.

Schutz says, "I like people to interpret [the pieces] as they choose." A critical dimension of any jewelry object is the history of its passage from artist to owner(s), and the layers of meaning accrued during this process. Schutz describes her *Warrior* pieces as "children" -- a term she doesn't use for other series -- and this language betrays the fact that she conceived the pieces while rethinking family issues. Such knowledge enriches relationships with customers. Schutz confirms that when a customer responds to a piece, "that connection is to their essence, their soul. If I can make someone feel something, that's a great gift." As Helen Drutt English observes, jewelry objects are mediating elements in the "golden triangle" of emotional bonds between the jeweler, the owner/wearer, and the object.

Schutz's work inevitably draws her into this intimate triangle of gifts given and received. While social context is important for understanding contemporary jewelry, social connections must be thought of separately from the works' capacity to generate and carry meaning. Collapsing these two facets of jewelry art has helped perpetuate the idea that the jewelry object is a container for an artist's personal expression. Drutt labels this a weakness of art jewelry and comments on the "hopelessness of everyone trying to create their own public languages about their private feelings. We are approaching the stage where images are meaningless without an interview with their creator."[8]

Jewelry is not the only art form that has confronted such dilemmas. Working in literary criticism, phenomenologist Wolfgang Iser points out that the power of an art object is actually limited if its value depends on a "true" meaning determined by the artist's private intention.[9] By privileging such a meaning, Iser suggests, the work's material reality has less power to engage freely with a viewer in a meaning-producing interaction. Echoing this view, Schutz affirms that "each person brings his own history to a piece. I'm the temporary keeper of its life...next time -- it changes." Schutz's visual idioms demonstrate how jewelry provides a framework for where multiple meanings can grow and change. Schutz articulates Iser's critical aim: to reclaim the art work's capacity to endure and create meaning in many contexts, over time, and independently of the artist.

Viewing jewelry art in terms of meaning production and varied experience also helps break open the "self-absorbed art practice that further insulates metalsmithing from an audience other than

itself," as Mary Douglas puts it.[10] Schutz's work explicitly opens a dialogue with Richard Serra's sculptural vision. Her work can also be connected to Pierre Degen, another artist who explores ornament as an event of inhabiting a sculptural structure, and does so in very literal terms. Inevitably, the act of crossing accepted boundaries provokes controversy. Peter Dormer and Ralph Turner, for example, claim that Degen takes on a "wider category of speculation and interpretation associated with the fine arts, with sculpture in particular." They conclude that Degen's turn to large-scale forms "confirms...that one of the limits which keeps jewelry to an essentially decorative function is its literal lack of physical space in which to create gesture and develop metaphor."[11]

Schutz acknowledges that her work is intended to be decorative. It also undeniably has the capacity for encompassing enormous gestural sweeps -- a provocative accomplishment that suggests that building bridges between media can be more productive and explanatory of art work than erecting barriers. In Schutz's case, the very concept of volume sets her free. Her visual idioms enable her to transform space metaphorically, creating a volume for exploring time in its many forms and scales. Her work implicitly uses a technique key to the work of art from a phenomenological perspective: it provides open spaces that invite a viewer in and leave room for the imagination to do its work of creating and recreating meaning over and over again, with each new experience of the work.[12]

In jewelry, these open spaces can take many forms: for example Ron Ho's juxtapositions of narrative-provoking elements, or Glenda Arentzen's co mingling of textures and colors that demand sense-making from a viewer. In Biba Schutz's work, a sense of open space is encouraged through the artist's use of literal open spaces. Open wire structures allow the viewer to "flow through" the piece, as she says. Indeed, they can stand as symbolic representations of the work of art's conceptual openness, and of its role as a framework that houses complex and encompassing aesthetic experience. From time to time, Schutz says, a customer expresses the desire to slip a treasured rock or shell inside one of the forms. "I say, 'Yes, you can.' But," she adds firmly, "it's already filled up." ■

Tacey Rosolowski is a lecturer and writer. She divides her time between Clinton, New York and Madison, Wisconsin.

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1 German philosopher Edmund Husserl established phenomenology as a distinct movement in the early part of this century. Since then, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty have adapted elements of his method of describing awareness (though with significant differences). In the 1960s, Wolfgang Iser applied Husserlian method to aesthetics. More recently, Sven Birkerts uses Husserl's notion of consciousness-as-depth in his popular book, *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age*.

2 Contemporary post-structural theory rejects phenomenology's assumption that the subject has control over the order it perceives within itself and the external world. Instead, contemporary theory argues that the subject is itself produced by numerous forms of cultural discourse. In the process, theory frequently dismisses the idea that "experience" has any relevance. Culture's constitutive power over the subject is undeniable. However, by rejecting experience as a category, theory becomes another example of how culture is a grid: it captures and explains some kinds of events, but lets others fall through the mesh, since they don't register with accepted cultural codes.

Many facets of art experience fall into this category. So does theoretical work. Theoreticians often ignore the fact that their work has a phenomenal component: it engages the passions, emotions and even physical sensations (or fantasies of them). Literary critic Elizabeth Bruss has pointed out that postmodern theories possess their own aesthetic quality, a view that should prompt us to reconsider the gap that western paradigms place between embodied, phenomenal experience and intellectual labor. The theorizing of jewelry -- sensual, bodily, and conceptual -- may be a perfect arena in which to explore this gap and re-see the phenomenal from the position of a post-modern age.

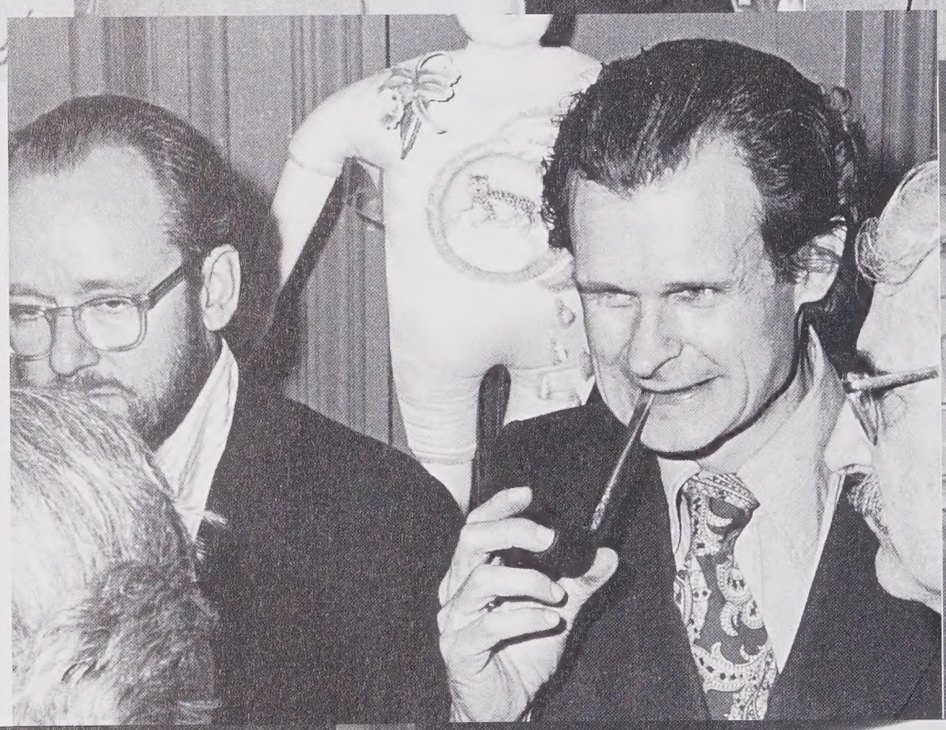
3 Theoretical languages are tools and no single theoretical language can describe all art works in their specificity. Nor does the usefulness of a theoretical vocabulary in one case disallow other approaches to artistic work or raise one above another.
4 The technical term "temporality" underscores that time may take many different forms and have many different effects on a viewer.
5 Serra's *Torqued Ellipses* are pictured on the website: http://home.sprynet.com/-mindweb/richard2.htm.
6 Cook, 2.
7 Cook, 2.
8 Drutt and Dormer, 178.
9 See Iser, "Partial Art -- Total Interpretation."
10 Douglas, 5.
11 Dormer and Turner, 150.
12 See Iser, "Grasping a Text."

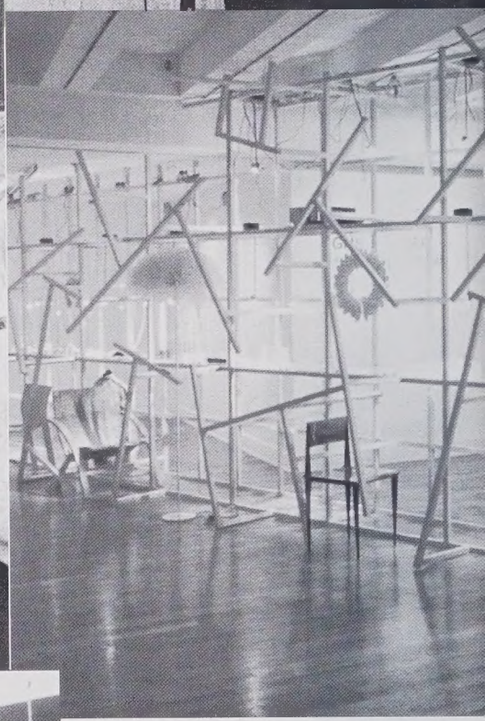
above
Helen Drutt: Philadelphia
First Location 1625 Spruce Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1995

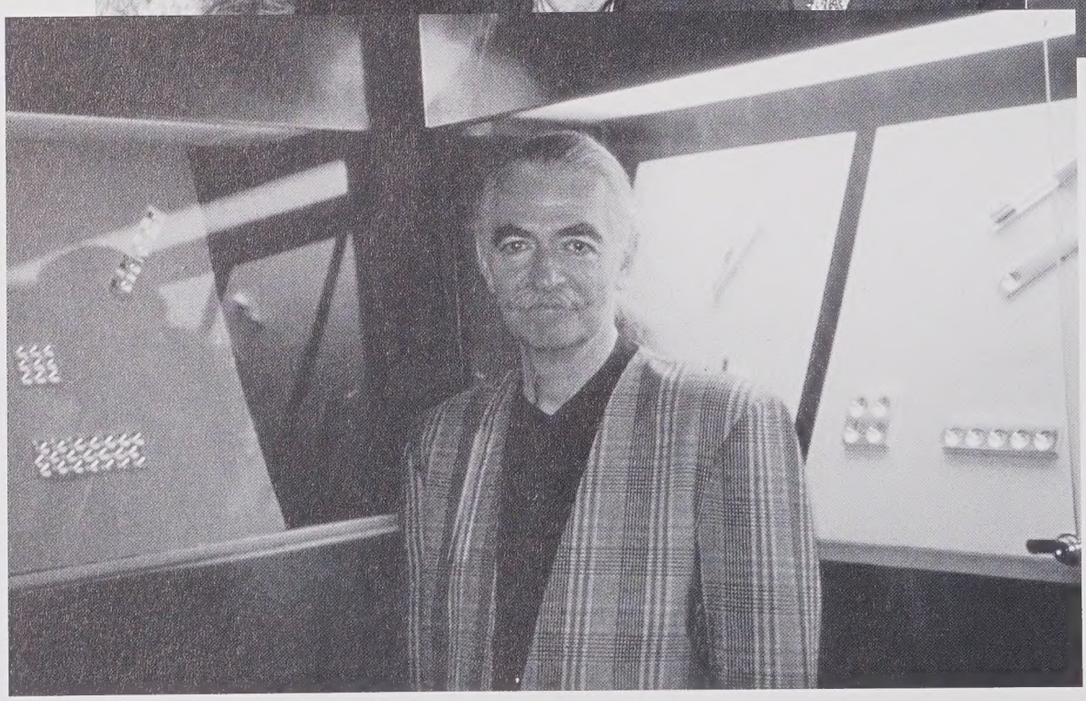
opposite page
Helen Drutt English
c. 1987-1988

interview by **MARJORIE SIMON**

Helen Williams Drutt English is a remarkable woman and a formidable presence in the jewelry world and the larger craft world. Helen Drutt Gallery now Helen Drutt: Philadelphia, 1721 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennyslvania has focused on contemporary ceramics and jewelry. The artists represented are among the most significant of their time and ours. Exhibitors have included the late Olaf Skoogfors, the late Toni Goessler-Snyder, and the late Richard Reinhardt, as well as Gijs Bakker, Bruno Martinazzi, Breon O'Casey, Thomas Gentille, Sharon Church, and Bruce Metcalf, among others. Twenty-five years ago, Helen Drutt created a gallery with a commitment to the careers of artists at a time when crafts were sold in shops. I talked with her at her home in Philadelphia.



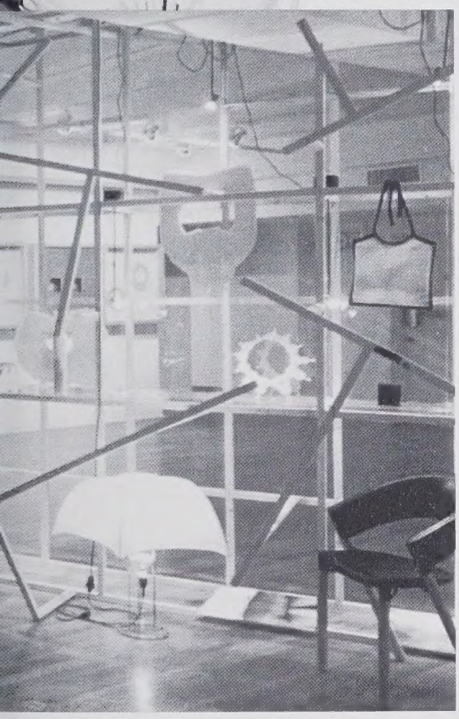




TALKING WITH **HELEN DRUTT**

MS: I'd like to talk a little bit about how you got to be who you are and where you are.

HD: I worked very hard, and I was completely involved in looking at what was happening. I didn't start out with a goal. I was interested in the people, and I spent hours talking to them -- their ideas excited me. Not only their aesthetic concerns, but I was interested in what was happening technically and in their total frame of reference.... How does one develop one's life? From the beginning, I was exposed to the decorative arts. My paternal grandmother embroidered and made quilts. My mother sewed and crocheted, and my father had a passion for decorative china, gardening, and painting. And I lived in a city in which the returning GIs and Japanese-Americans came to the countryside and established independent studios (for example, Philip Lloyd Powell, George Nakashima and Paul Evans). Drawn to Bucks County, Pennsylvania, I spent time in studios, and looked at works, and established a dialogue.



With a select group of members of the professional community who had joined the college faculties, I formed a craft council in Philadelphia. I met the right person at the right time who helped me realize the organization. I didn't do it by myself. The Reverend Dick Jones was central to our meetings.

MS: Together you created the Philadelphia Council of Professional Craftsmen (PCPC). How did you even know back then that that was something that was important?

HD: I have no idea. But I thought in order to get something done you had to have a collective group of people who were interested in the same things and who were involved.

MS: But you had a vision, because....

HD: [disagreeing] But you're trying to give me late twentieth-century vocabulary and psychological position. I was like any other person in history who was interested in something, aware of its existence but didn't know too much about its presence. And everything was accidental. When I met Dick Jones at a meeting of the "Y" Arts Council, we were sitting and talking, and I asked him what he was doing. I was working as a volunteer at the "Y" Arts Council and he told me what his mission was, and I said, "Well, if you ever get around to the crafts, give me a call." He said, "What do you really mean about the crafts?" And I replied that there's great activity in the city and nobody really knows anything about it. If we could bring the artists together, we could really develop an awareness. Dick said, "If you invite them to our office [*M*etropolitan *A*ssociates of *P*hiladelphia, a group of churches studying secular changes] for the first meeting it provides you with a professional forum." If you invite them to your house, they're going to think you're just another housewife. Which I was.

Philadelphia was unique because there were many colleges -- Moore College of Art, PCA (Philadelphia College of Art, now University of the Arts), and Tyler School of Art -- and it was surrounded by the independent studios of Wharton Eshrick, Byron Temple, Nakashima, and so forth. Among the M.F.A. gradu-

top left
Jem Freyaldenhoven Solo Exhibition, 1979. First location, Helen Drutt Gallery. Left to right: Drutt, Richard Reinhardt, P. Vaskys.
Photograph Matthew Drutt

top right
From left to right: David Watkins, Helen Drutt, David Lundy, Wendy Ramshaw, presenting brooch to Philadelphia Museum of Art on the occasion of their exhibition sponsored by P.C.P.C., A.I.A., and Mathey Bishop. 1973.
Photograph courtesy of Philadelphia Museum of Art

middle left
Olaf Skoogfors, at first location of Helen Drutt Gallery. Exhibit October 29-December 20, 1975, closed due to death of Skoogfors.
Photograph courtesy of Helen Drutt.

middle right
Installation, Gijs Bakker, Vormgener. December 1989-January 1990. Helen Drutt Gallery, New York, NY.

bottom
Thomas Gentile,
Solo Exhibition
Helen Drutt, Philadelphia
September 12, 1997

top left
Helen W. Drutt English, Sigrid Bartew, Max and Ruth Frolich Museum Bellerive, Zurich, Switzerland
February, 1994

top right
Sharon Church and Helen Drutt at opening for Jem Freyaldenhoven, May-June, 1979. First location, Helen Drutt Gallery
Photograph by Matthew Drutt

center left
Michael Dumas, Helen W. Drutt English, Matthew Drutt, Pavel Opocensky, Gijs Bakker Exhibition Helen Drutt, Philadelphia, May 10, 1986

center right
Helen W. Drutt English, Inge Asenbaum, Ida Van Gelder Boelan Hanau, Germany, 1995

bottom left
Claus Bury and Gijs Bakker. Helen Drutt Gallery, first location, 1625 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, PA. September 2, 1975
Photograph courtesy of Helen Drutt

bottom right
Installation, posthumous exhibition for Olaf Skoogfors, 20th Century Goldsmith, at Philadelphia College of Art, 1979, curated by Helen Drutt
Photograph courtesy of Helen Drutt

ates of Tyler were Albert Paley, Eleanor Moty, Gary Griffin, Bruce Metcalf, and Robin Quigley; this was a particularly rich time in history. I invited craftsmen who were on the faculties of these schools to attend an informal gathering. Little did I know I was going to become the unpaid executive director for seven years. The Philadelphia Council of Professional Craftsmen was formed, and we began to organize exhibitions and lectures. In 1973, under the auspices of PCPC in cooperation with the "Y" Arts Council and A.I.A., *Seattle* USA came to Philadelphia, followed by David Watkins's and Wendy Ramshaw's inaugural exhibition in the United States. We also organized a national cup show, as well as group and solo exhibitions for the membership. We all worked together. We installed exhibitions, shipped work, and journeyed through the country. I traded slides in order to establish information.

I was the go-between. And then PCA was looking for someone to develop a curriculum for the history of crafts, and they couldn't find a teacher who was interested in the field after 1930 or 1945. The president of PCA, George Cullers, decided with Olaf Skoogfors that I should immerse myself in the library and formulate the first course in the United States. I gathered information from primary sources, since the libraries had little to offer at that time. Nicholas Pevsner's *Pioneers of Modern Design* was our bible.

MS: Let's talk about jewelry.... You became interested in jewelry because you loved to wear it or because it was portable art or... you [once] said you wore a brooch, and it was a way to get people to talk to you.

HD: My grandmother's cameo and a circle pin were the only pieces I owned in 1960. I didn't think of acquiring jewelry or adorning myself in that manner.

MS: So how did you make that transition?
HD: During the formative months of PCPC, we had a meeting at Stanley Lechtzin's and

he showed us a brooch he was working on, and I'd never seen anything like it in my life. It was electroformed silver with a rough-hewn tourmaline crystal and a baroque pearl -- it looked like an abstract painting. It was the first time I felt the passionate desire to possess something. This was in a period in which artists were making major transitions with their ideas. They were moving from an interest in social jewelry to works that had a strong singular artistic identity. I realized that wearing the work acted as a catalyst for people to inquire about the movement. You couldn't carry a chair or a pot to meetings; but you could wear a brooch, and it would invite inquiries. It became the connecting visual element which drew attention and prompted information about the field.

MS: It seems to me you take your responsibilities very seriously as an educator. And you're incredibly supportive of your artists, and you take that responsibility seriously. Could you talk about how you see the responsibility of the gallery owner, what's the responsibility of the collector, and what you see as the responsibility of the artist, about how those three things interconnect?

HD: The collector has paid for the privilege of living with the work as well as wearing it, and becomes an important link in the life of the work. There's a mutual responsibility between the artist and the gallery. Verbal commitments are as important as written documents. I do not have written contracts. Alfred Knopf never had them. He once stated that if a writer didn't wish to honor a written contract, he could or would stop writing for five years.

The responsibility of the gallery is to support the artists, to help place the work and not to be political about it but to make certain that the work is placed in an appropriate manner -- that is, first come, first served. It is the gallery's role to educate the public. Placing the work in public institutions is important, but I strongly believe in supporting the private collector who wears the work and expands its visibility. It's not hidden in a drawer, or spending eternity in an air-conditioned room, taken out periodically for exhibition. I used to believe that private collections would eventually go to museums; unfortunately, during my lifetime that has changed, and they go to the auction houses. Private collections are not automatically left to the great institutions any more. It's important always to be aware that the gallery's responsibility is to provide the bridge between the studio and the public forum. How the work is exhibited is part of the continuing support system you give to the artist who has trusted you. You are the "voice" for that person. You are trusted to carry their ideas and thoughts into the public domain. That's a serious responsibility.

It is important to have support material. Books are established with slides, reviews, and resumes, related material written about their past and present lives, and I maintain an extensive library which is used by individuals throughout the world. People can come to the gallery for years at a time without acquiring work, and you cannot get upset about that. It's part of the educational process. But the concept of collecting and patronage has changed in the last fifteen years.

MS: How has it changed?

HD: People now become celebrities because they're collectors and, in doing so, act as messengers of information for the field, as well as drawing attention to little-known works. Collectors hold the reins to history -- they function without boards, without committees, and respond to the works that surround

Photograph courtesy of Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1973

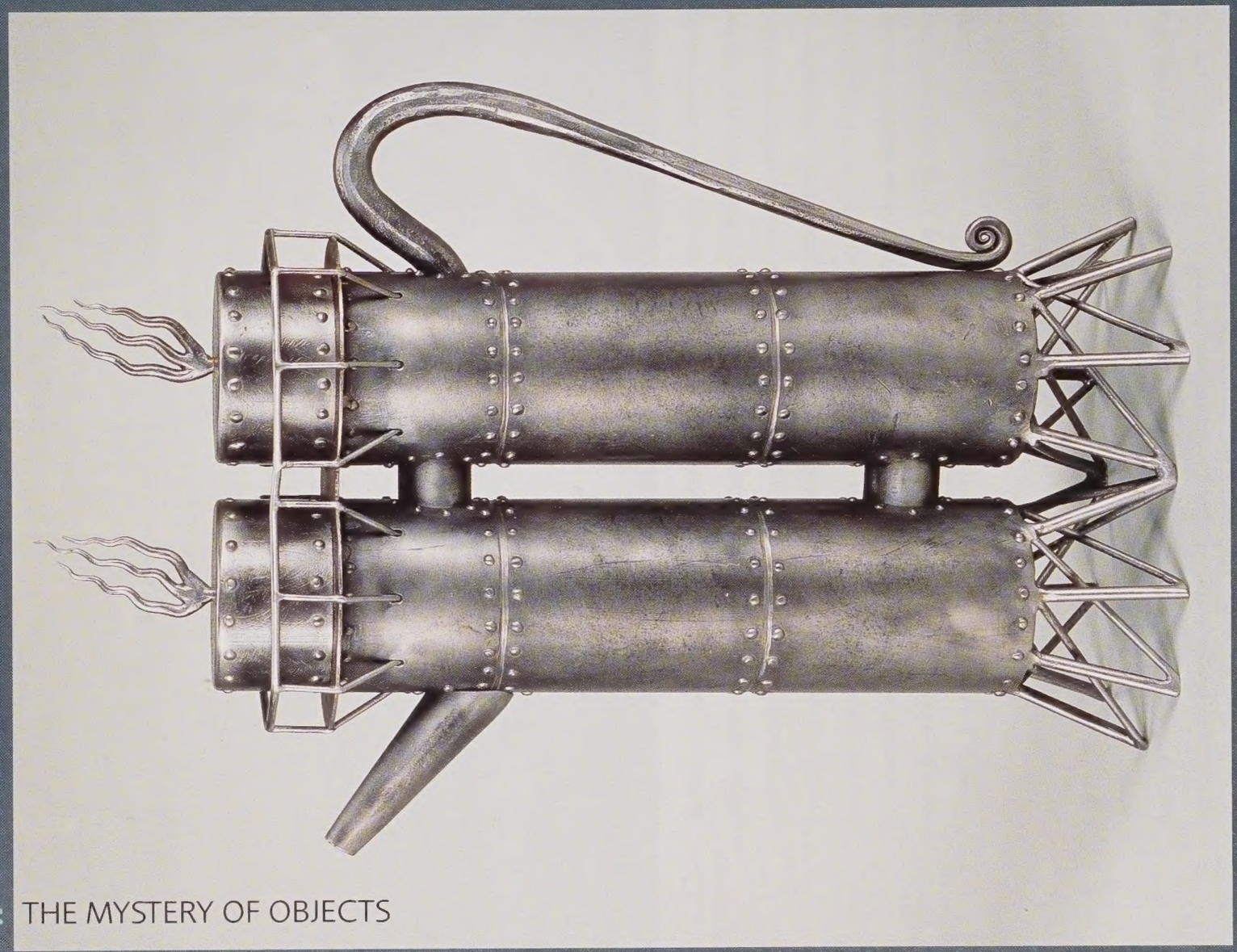
them, and make individual and personal decisions based on their passion for the work. There are a number of historical documents showing the history of patronage; it would make an interesting panel. Since the '80s, there's a whole different kind of collecting energy -- it is more public. Collectors' groups have formed, and they draw greater attention to the works, reinforcing the field.

Publications should annotate works carefully. It is important for the public to know that the work is acquired, whether by a museum or private collection. Precise documentation is central to research and historical survival.

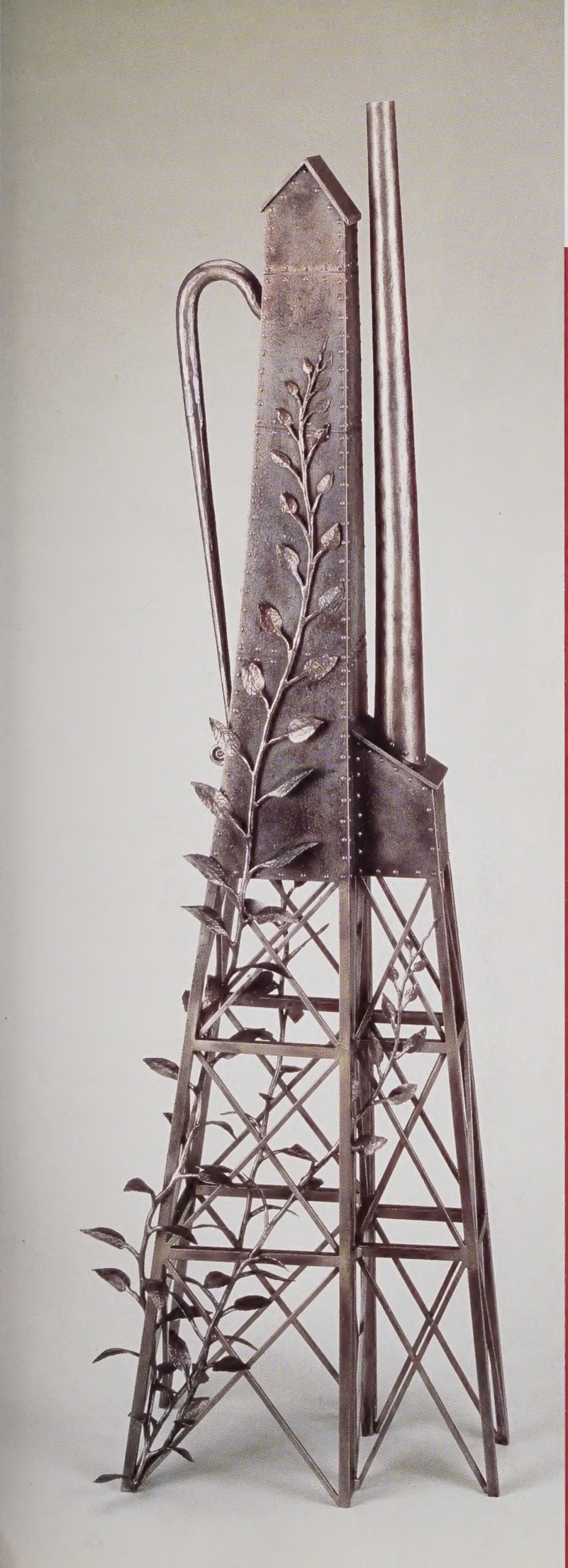
MS: To know where they can see it.

HD: No, it's not only where they can see it. It is for people to understand that the artist has been supported by a public institution or a private collector, that there is a support system. It's what I call the Golden Triangle: the artist, the work, and the audience, private or public. All three components are essential to complete the creative cycle. ■

Marjorie Simon is a writer, metalsmith, and the chairperson of *Metalsmith's* Editorial Advisory Committee.



DAVID GIGNAC: THE MYSTERY OF OBJECTS



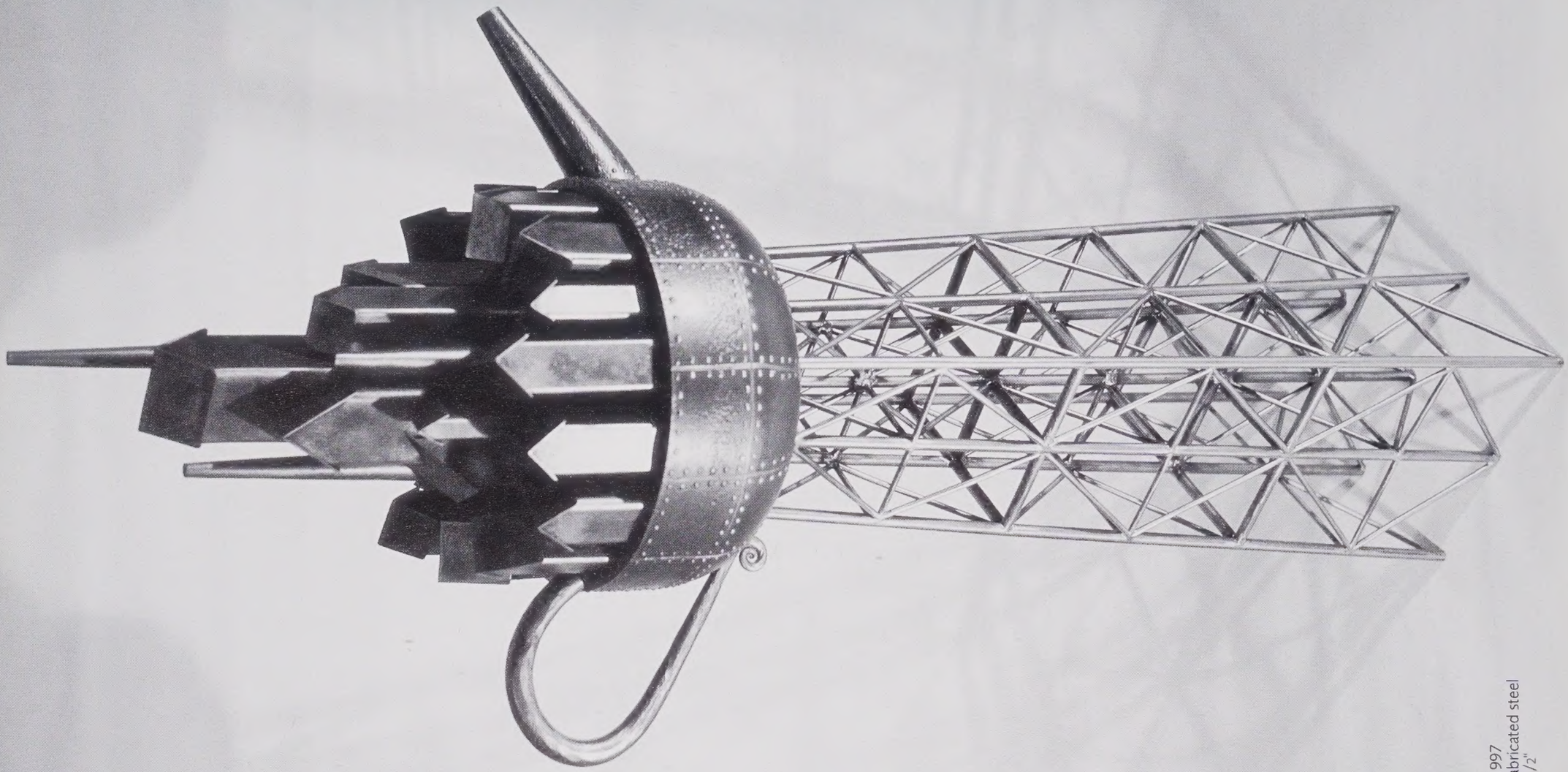
TEXT BY **MEGAN CORWIN**

Years ago, I traveled across the United States by car and drove through the industrial town of Gary, Indiana, in the middle of the night. Immense flames were shooting straight up in rhythmic bursts from the factories, and all I could see were dark towers in various heights and shapes. It looked like Hell. Somehow David Gignac's pieces have combined that image with an irresistible playfulness and animation, turning my response to the darkness from a sense of fear to a sense of mystery, the way a toy monster or war element transmutes the frightening qualities of the original into a controllable and highly intimate experience.

Each piece is steel, pitted and aged, monochrome black, and reflective of the powerful silhouettes of the steel mills. When I first came upon his work, I was running -- like the White Rabbit, I am always late -- past the Kimzey Miller Gallery in downtown Seattle, on my way from one appointment to another. I literally

left
Two Stage, 1998
forged and fabricated steel
21 x 14 x 6"

right
Host, 1998
forged and fabricated steel
62 x 17 x 12"



Metropolis, 1997
forged and fabricated steel
66 x 26 x 14 1/2"

INSTEAD OF BEING REFURBISHED, **THIS RESPECTABLE OLD MATERIAL** STANDS AS ITSELF IN PLAYFUL YET PROFOUND ART THAT PAYS HOMAGE TO ITS PAST AND FUTURE.

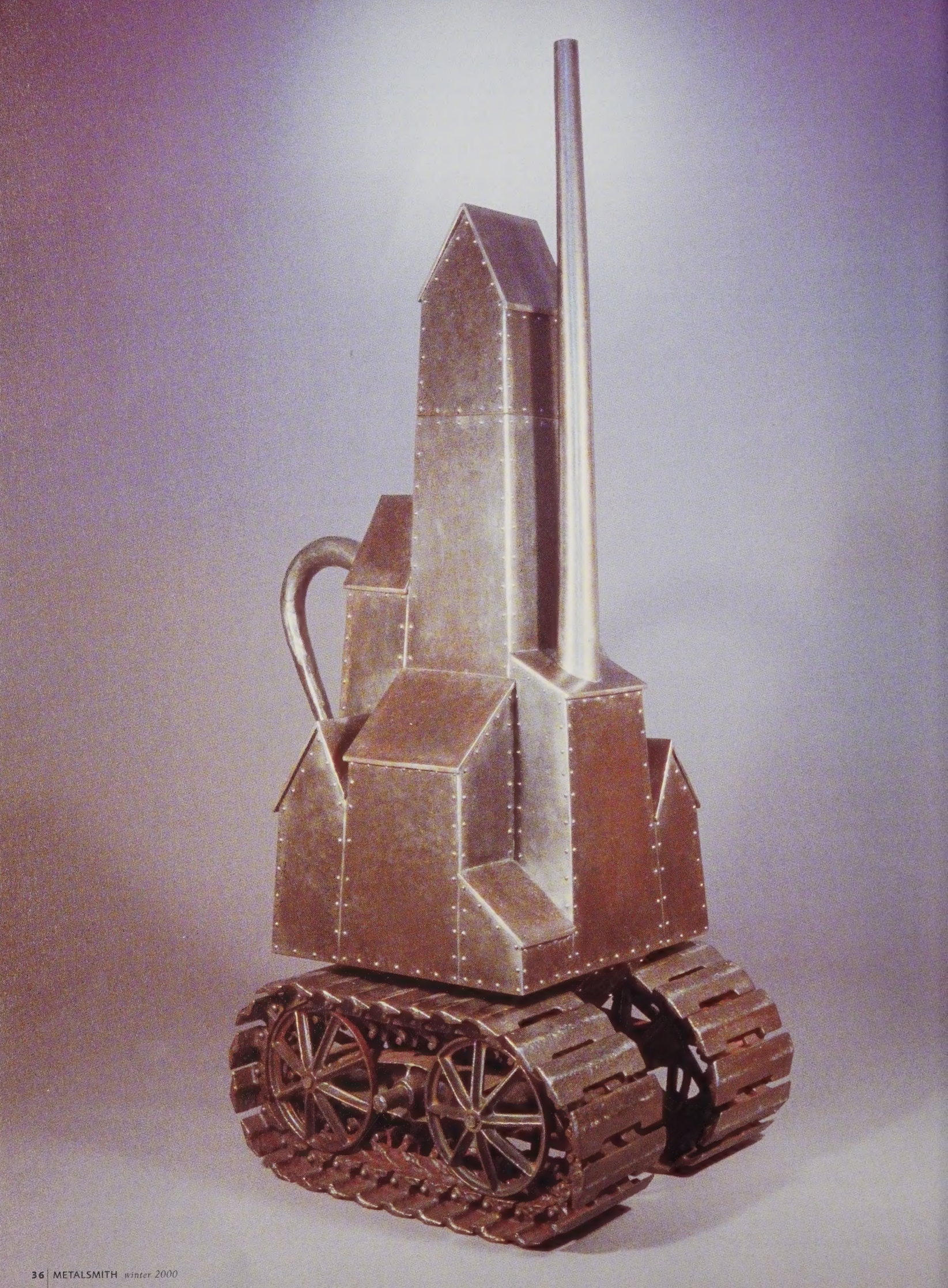
stopped in my tracks. The piece in the window was so compelling that I risked angering the Queen, as it were, and ran in to see what I thought was an anomaly. I had seen this gallery before, and had not equated it with metalwork as I know it. Gignac's piece was constructed in a format consistent with sculpture but in a manner (attention to detail being the most common shorthand description) that spoke of a crafts' sensibility. What I was experiencing when I looked at this work was the first of many childhood memories, adult reflections on the state of the anthropomorphsized world, and personal experiences of places, people, and time.

Gignac refers to these works as teapots, yet none of the pieces made entirely of steel function as teapots. However, they all have removable "lids" and are very carefully constructed with water-tight seams, ground joints, and a design for longevity that involves the use of recycled, previously aged material. There is a satisfying circular sense to this; the steel was manufactured in factories that look much like his "pots" and was scrapped after years of use, ending up in a recyling yard. The material was then chosen by the artist for its obvious signs of use and age. Instead of being refurbished, this respectable old material stands as itself in playful yet profound art that pays homage to its past and future.

In *Industrial Perk*, there are two handles as well as two smokestacks that are perking like steam from a joyful teapot. The double-entendre of the title is as layered as the artist's forms, which in this piece are slightly leaning factory/house forms with decorative rivets outlining panels of pitted iron that form the factory "building." There is a cartoon-like animation reminiscent of early black-and-white Warner Brothers' classics. Yet the height, the doubling and stacking of elements, and the lifting of the form onto an industrial grid give this piece an elegance that is an important aspect of Gignac's style.

Metropolis, an entire city of dark plain houses and factories with a few smokestacks attached, is served up in an open-top teapot. Somewhere a lid, maybe more than one, can be removed, giving the impression that there is an entrance to this city made of dark winding narrow streets like a medieval city on a hill. This is the most endearing thing about Gignac's work. The more you isolate your gaze and concentrate on a piece without distraction, the more you enter this small-scale world, with its heavy walled buildings in which the "common man" toils. The work is playful in the manner of the author, Italo Calvino. This author writes about the macrocosm as if it were filled with eccentric emotional characters, and where a "common man" is capable of the most uncommon actions in response to inner forces. In Gignac's *Metropolis*, the streets and houses seem empty, except perhaps for dark beings with mechanical constructs working behind iron walls, making teapots around the clock.

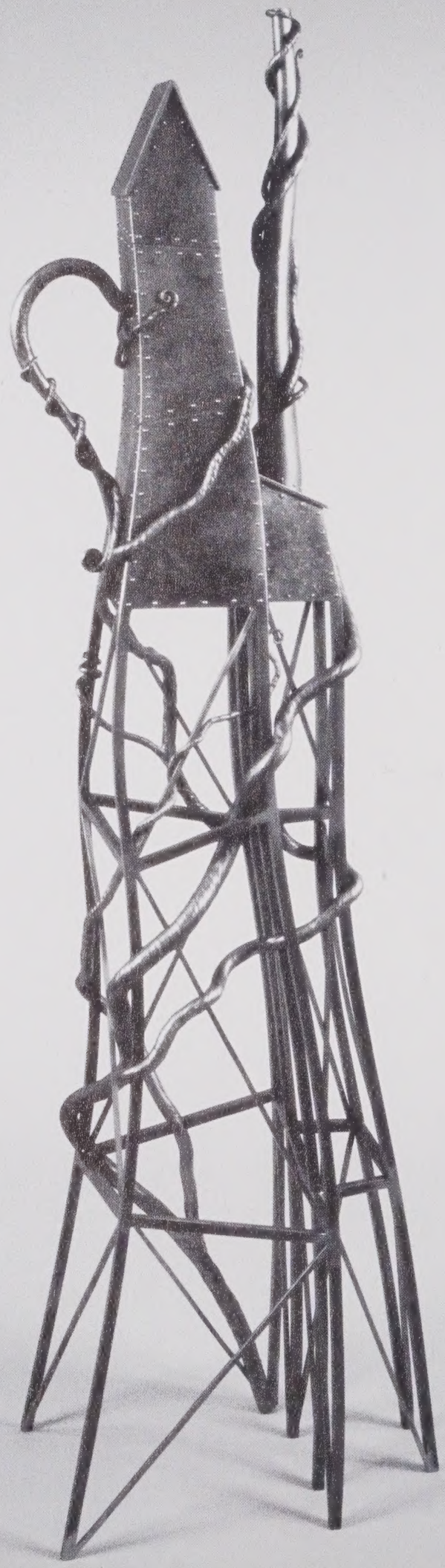
The artist describes *Metropolis* as a hypothetical solution to a hypothetical problem. What would happen if we ran out of room to build but continued to need housing and factories? Would human beings begin to stack their houses and factories? Does human inventiveness and adaptability mean there will never be an end to "biggering"? Anyone who has read *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss may recognize what I see in this and in much of Gignac's work. Factories are built to manufacture whatsits, which are ultimately unnecessary but continue to multiply, killing all of nature in the process. However, the boy in *The Lorax* is given a present of one Trufulla tree seed and told to renew the earth. Gignac gives us *Host*, a piece in which a vine of an ordinary type slowly and gracefully creeps up the sides of one of the more pitted, more aged factories. The strength of the scaffold base, the straight and tall stack, and the handle -- which on this piece is less curvilinear and more forceful than in other pieces -- are all undermined by this innocuous but irrepressible plant. A future never reached is forever frozen in iron.



THE MORE YOU **ISOLATE YOUR GAZE AND CONCENTRATE ON A PIECE** WITHOUT DISTRACTION, THE MORE YOU ENTER THIS SMALL-SCALE WORLD, WITH ITS HEAVY WALLED BUILDINGS IN WHICH THE "COMMON MAN" TOILS.

opposite page
Nomad, 1998
forged and fabricated steel
48 x 24 x 14"

this page
Bottle with Twigs, 1999
forged and fabricated steel
36 x 12 x 10"



"THE MOST INTERESTING STORIES ARE RECORDED ON **OBJECTS WHICH HAVE SUFFERED UTTER NEGLECT.**... IN MUCH THE SAME WAY A PERSON'S FACE DEVELOPS A RICH CHARACTER THROUGH LIFE EXPERIENCES, SO DO INANIMATE OBJECTS."

In Peter Sis's children's book, *The Three Garden Keys*, the protagonist follows a tricky and clue-filled path through the city of his childhood to a wooden dome, "filled with a strange collection of things. Everything is quietly shimmering, motionless, as if frozen in time. Out of the wood-work come strange mythical robots." One of the robots proceeds to tell the story of beings made of clock parts, the combination of a great clock-maker and his work. Gignac says he is drawn to these factory forms, as they represent a portion of the world everyone sees but ignores: the realm of the everyday man or woman. The factories are very American to him. Yet when I look at them I think of Peter Sis and his search in Prague for the three keys to his childhood -- the time when the most ordinary can so easily and quickly become the extraordinary through imagination.

It makes sense to me that David Gignac looks at René Magritte and recognizes the mystery of inanimate objects, and that he displaces his objects as Magritte did. But Magritte is just an influence, as are the clocks and mechanical objects the young Gignac was allowed to disas-semble and attempt to repair, and as are the trips across the country he has made, examining the American landscape and identifying factories as icons. Pieces such as *Tale that Wags the Dog* emerge from such experiences. Here the stack has completely overwhelmed the simple form of the leaning factory, which pushes the stack forward. Many of his pieces remind me of cartoon steam trains, with their constant sense of tension or excitement that is created by the seemingly flexible engine straining forward, smoke puffing from the stack with the engine's effort.

In *Traveler*, the teapot/engine is trapped on its own piece of track. The teapot rolls when pushed to either end, but it can neither fall off its track to crash below nor continue on its journey. The

enigma posed by this piece is reflected in *Escape*, a teapot factory that sits on six-foot-tall scaffolding with a perspectival ladder (wider at the bottom and narrowing at the top) running from the floor to a tiny window at the top of the factory -- or is it running from the window to the floor? The artist posits this as emblematic of the dilemma of ordinary work and the ordinary family. Are you escaping to work from the family, or to the family from work?

Escape and displacement are themes not only in Gignac's pieces, but constants in his life. He grew up in Alfred, New York, and studied painting, glass and ceramics at the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University. On taking a one-semester teaching position at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, he moved from a familiar environment to one of discomfort and stultification. Eventually, he gratefully escaped to the West Coast to settle on an island just north of Seattle. Working in a glass studio Gignac found he needed to develop his own work in a medium that did not reflect another's direction, another's passion. He switched to steel, and began the series of teapot factories that he exhibits in Seattle and at the Museo in Langley on Whidbey Island.

As is the case with many "craft" artists, Gignac found that the material he used became a conduit for his philosophy. In an artist's statement, he says, "the most interesting stories are recorded on objects which have suffered utter neglect.... In much the same way a person's face develops a rich character through life experiences, so do inanimate objects." By using recycled iron, Gignac is adding history and character to his sculptures. In pieces such as *Canteen*, he uses this character and the suggestion of function to excite the innate archeologist in all of us. This piece is about the mystery of objects. Are they entirely functional? If so, why is a particular element a part of their design? Why is the spout so long? If this piece were dug up centuries from now, what questions would arise?

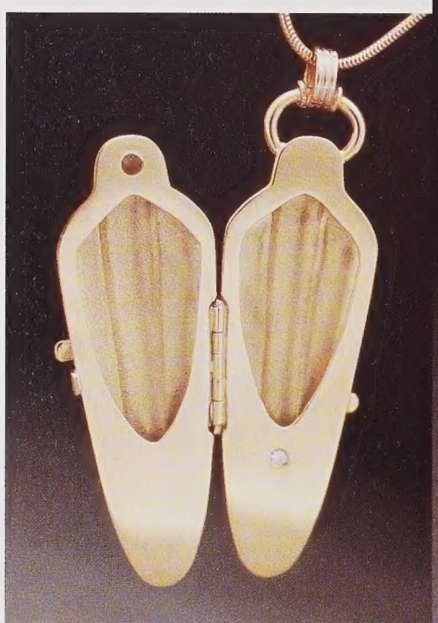
Often, even the most functional object is embellished. *Canteen* is adorned with an entirely unnecessary finial that is suggestive of flames fanned by raging winds. In the case of the factories Gignac has studied, there were often design elements that did not enhance or affect the performance of the factory or workers, but seemed to exist simply to satisfy aesthetic needs. Perhaps a subtle communication develops between the users of the building and the designer; an unconscious connection that affects the communicants in very human ways, just as the height of a ceiling or arching of a doorway can affect our perception and comfort in a living/working space.

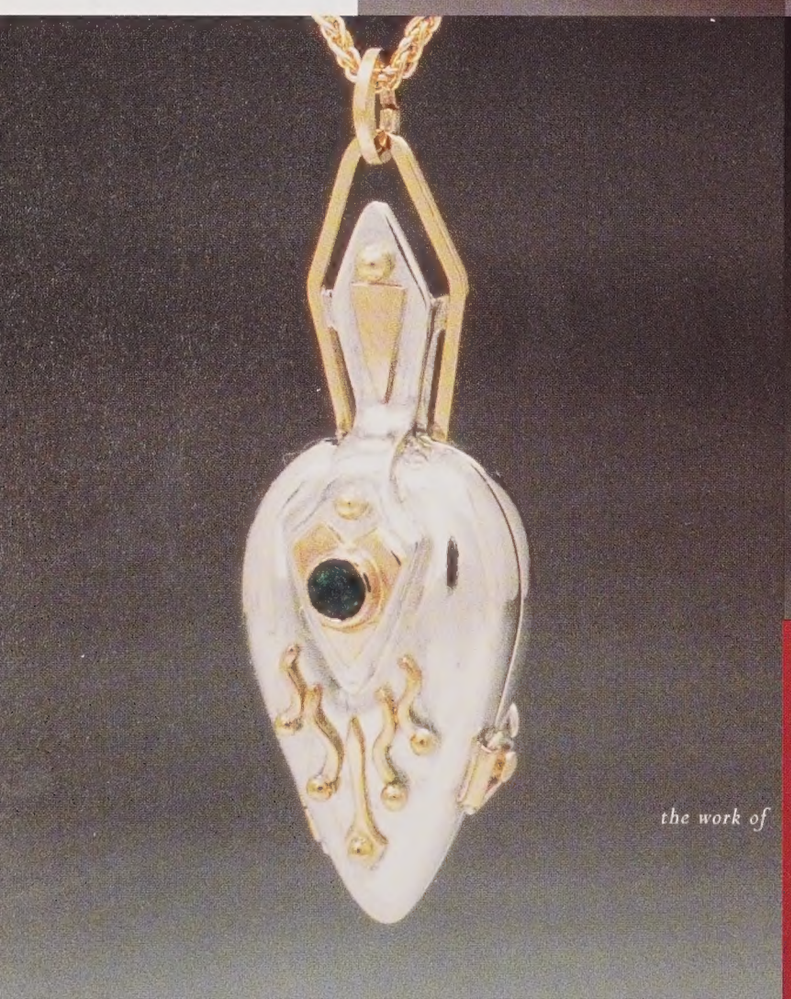
The embellishment in Gignac's work -- the rivets, the extra long stacks or spouts, the patched iron plates or tractor wheel bases such as in *Nomad* -- have a wonderful tin toy and erector set quality to them. I want to play with Gignac's toys and build with him. Most of all I want to climb up the ladder in *Escape* and pass through that tiny window to the world beyond. ■

Nancy Megan Corwin is a metalsmith who lives in Seattle, Washington.

left
The Wrestlers, 1999
forged and fabricated steel
67 x 19 x 13"

OBSERVATIONS

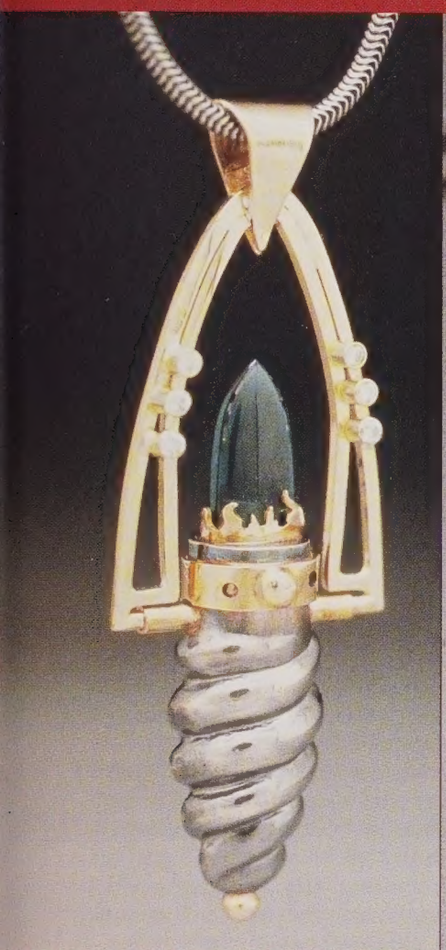




the work of LISA KRIKAWA

More than a precious bauble, or even a talisman, a locket serves as a charm and a container. Worn in close proximity to the source of breath and to the heart, its contents are often secret, often fetishistic: a lock of hair from a lover, a faded photo of someone from times past. The fact that such objects still appeal to us in a somewhat cynical and technological age can serve as a source of both embarrassment and hope.

Lisa Krikawa constructs many of her contemporary lockets in the form of a vial, a container for precious and sometimes dangerous liquids. Could it be that the artist recognizes that, like liquid balms or poisons, memories can slip through our grasp or at times burn and sear our psyches? Her careful and precise crafting, however, effectively veils such ironies. Only through wear, handling, and time does the paradoxical complexity of her pieces reveal itself.



above left
Bottle Shrine (closed), 1999
sterling, 18k, diamonds, tourmaline

above right
Bottle Shrine (open), 1999
sterling, 18k, diamonds, tourmaline

opposite page top left
Voodoo Locket (open), 1997
18k, palladium, diamonds

opposite page top right
Voodoo Locket (closed), 1997
18k, palladium, diamonds

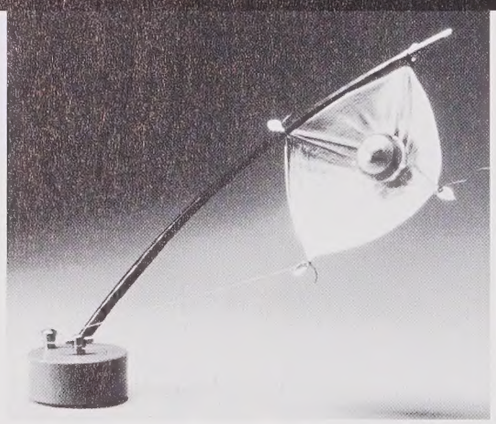
opposite page bottom left
Queen of Hearts (closed), 1998
sterling, 18k, emerald

opposite page bottom right
Queen of Hearts (open), 1998
sterling, 18k, emerald

JOE MUENCH: SOLO EXHIBITION

CRAFT ALLIANCE
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI
APRIL 30 - MAY 31, 1999

text by **TERESA CALLAHAN**



above left
Vessel, 1993
sterling, steel, bronze, brass, paint
8 x 8 x 22"

above right
Breaker, 1997
steel, oil, paint
6 x 6 x 19"

"Victory over human limitations...comes from the vital energy of masses of men sweating within the nightmare of creation -- and it is not even in man's hands to program."
Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death*

In the mysterious way that life pushes in the direction of its own expansion, we cannot understand life's course, because we do not know the purpose of creation. We can only feel life straining in ourselves and observe it in others. Life expands in unknown directions for unknown reasons. It must also be true that a certain philistine mindset protects against any possibility of choice and celebrates a triumph over freedom. Why do humans accept a philistine, trivial life? Perhaps this acceptance is embraced because there is danger in a full horizon of experience.

To experience *Joe Muench: Solo Exhibition* is to listen to the story of a non-trivial life in progress. Philistine metalsmithing this is not. Eight communicative sculptures comprise this exhibit. These pieces are refined, elegant, technically complex, stylistically simple -- a tribute to the considerable skill of the artist.

The early pieces, *The Chrysalis Series* (1996) and the dark *Breaker* (1997), reflect hibernation, isolation, emptiness, and desolation. *Vessel* (1993), is a particularly eloquent sculpture, showcasing a floating, shimmering silver square that has captured a married metal, spherical bulls-eye in its center. The silver reacts to its conquest by billowing and subtly straining under the weight. The sublime contrast here is that the silver is actually tied to a mechanical base by a glittering steel cable of fine gauge, which allows adjustment for the desired amount of manipulation, control, tension, and restriction. The irony is the perception of what is free and what is captive. When the viewer discovers that the cable is broken, the perplexity resonates within the viewer's subjective recall.

There are three recent sculptures that stylistically explore the theme of balance. The most successful, *Untitled* (1999), features a horizontal, reed-like oak line of sensitive articulation, balanced upon a formal black pedestal via an engineered, hinged mechanism. There is evidence of the artist's hand in exquisite lashings that tie the linear element to the frame of the mechanism. Either end of the linear element holds a hollow form. One is a cocoon-like, hanging, bronze hollow structure. A hollow, married metal cylinder is perched atop the other end. This piece bespeaks less constriction, more control by the artist, and a Zen balance between birth -- the cocoon -- and the containment of life -- the cylinder. *Untitled*, the most overtly constructionist piece here, appears almost rifle-like. The sensitive lashings have given way to mechanical brackets. A steel spiral unfolds and seemingly supports the horizontal, linear maple component that commands most of the space. A bottle-like form is perched upon the slender end of this linear component. Interestingly, this piece alludes to balance, but because it is a wall-mounted presentation, this is an illusion.

Delicate Balance (1998) is closely aligned with *Untitled*. It features the repetitive horizontal form balanced by an object on either end: the artist introduces a spherical mass that is comprised of melded, textural strips of coiled patinaed brass, the other end holds a hollow rectangle of brilliant nickel silver. The pedestal is reminiscent of eastern vessels, lending a more decorative appearance.

Cradle (1999) focuses on a suspended bronze horizontal form with spatulated ends. The midsection holds another spherical mass like that which appears in *Delicate Balance*. The horizontal form buckles from the sphere's weight, reflected in a textural treatment that makes the bronze appear elastic. This iconography is set against a dramatic slate background. The whole is encased in a shadow box wall construction.

Journeyman (1999) echoes *Breaker* and fittingly completes this exhibition. This piece, although apparently solid and mass-like with a dark exterior, has a peculiar lightness. The repeated coiled sphere, constructed of segments of steel, is cohesive, stronger, but with more fractured, negative space, allowing light to circulate. This is set against the pale interior of the sculpture, a profound contrast from the bleak, empty *Breaker*. *Breaker* appears to be a marooned vessel. *Journeyman* holds evidence of inner strength, and summarizes a journey that reconciles struggle with the joy of freedom. This journey teaches that truth and harmony come from balance. Juggling, opposition, compensation and a willingness to experience counterpoise achieves that balance.

Teresa Callahan is a critical writer in St. Louis, Missouri.

left
Karl Fritsch
Ring, 1997
silver, found stones

below
Robert Browning
Ring, 1997
silver, found stones

10 DAYS X 10 YEARS
CZECH SYMPOSIUM EXHIBITION
WAGNER ART GALLERY
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY,
EDWARDSVILLE, ILLINOIS
MAY 24 - JUNE 18, 1999

text by **BETSY SCHEIN GOLDMAN**

This retrospective exhibition, curated by Dr. Miroslav Cogan, is a selection of jewelry from the Turnov Museum in the Czech Republic that houses examples of objects created at the yearly symposium held at Turnov, in Northern Bohemia. The symposium attracts artists from around the world who come for ten days to live and work their creative magic in one of the most fertile mineralogical localities in Europe. The metalsmiths take field trips and pick up indigenous stones and other objects for use in projects executed over the duration of the workshop. The focus of the symposium is the problem solving. Creative design -- often using the found objects -- and the fabrication of the pieces are the important aspects of the intense, albeit short, time spent working their craft and not, necessarily, the "finishing" of each piece.

In this exhibit, the pieces of jewelry chosen by Dr. Cogan from work done over the past ten years are varied, unusual, experimental, and "modern." There is nothing mundane or ordinary, and many of the pieces have a genuine excitement about them. Perhaps the reason is that the time limit imposed mandates a sense of immediacy about the whole project.

René Hora's brooch and earring set -- made from carved plastic, Bohemian garnets, and silver -- is oversized for wearable jewelry and appears to represent a mountainous landscape. Vladimir Komnacky's brooch, *Zoom*, is a literal statement: the letters "Z-O-O-M" in silver, stacked one upon the other, culminating in an arrowhead set with garnets. A necklace by Petr Dvorak, of silver and semiopal, is a circlet of multi-sized silver cones, joined together with ball and socket joints. The front center cone is a cage of silver wire with a semiopal ball joint.

An elegant piece -- no doubt, the sparest and simplest design in the exhibit -- is a square of white marble approximately two and one half inches, with a horizontal niche carved across its face as a groove for a long and slender silver pin. Created by Marketa Silena, this brooch proves "less is more."

Czech Garden, by Ludmila Sikolová, is a two-inch-by-two-inch shallow box of silver, filled with pale green chips of olivine and surrounded by four silver flower forms, one on each side, that are hinged to lie flat or stand perpendicular to the pin. Pavel Filip's arrow-tip brooch uses silver, black opal, and emerald. It is very wearable and well-finished. Olivine is used again in Karl Fritsch's creation, a sea anemone brooch of silver with the stones tucked in the perimeter.

The actual compact disc used in Vratislav K. Novak's *Carussel* makes the most modern statement. Mounted on a flat glass square and composed of silver, steel, brass, the CD, and a hunk of rock crystal as the stylus, it glows in its presentation vitrine.

Two of the most refined works are a necklace and bracelet created by Lenka Beranová, made of silver. Rhodonite, rhodochrosite, amethyst, and rose quartz are set into graceful swerves of metal and look to be comfortable to wear. Another very wearable piece of jewelry is a brooch by Jirí Belda. An oxidized silver disc with raised concentric swirls culminating in a tiny Bohemian garnet at its center, it reminds one of the beauty and quiet elegance of the chambered nautilus.

American Susan Ewing is represented by *Prague Star*, a very large and obviously unwearable bracelet of aged and patinaed silver, cut and fabricated to depict the Star of Prague.

The exhibit suffers somewhat in the presentation. Sadly, plinths of various heights, some too tall for this short viewer and grouped too closely together, make it difficult to examine individual pieces. Many of the creations, having made the long trip across the sea, are in desperate need of cleaning and would have benefited from a little TLC before mounting. Despite these minor drawbacks, the exhibit is enough to hold one's attention long enough to allow its viewers to marvel at artists' inventive and creative spirit; especially, in this case, in the face of deadlines.

This exhibition program is sponsored in part by a grant from the Madison County Arts Council, the Illinois Arts Council–a state agency, AMERITECH, Target and Shell.

Betsey Shein Goldman is a writer who lives in Wildwood, Missouri.

FIN DE SIÉCLE

SEBASTOPOL CENTER FOR THE ARTS
SEBASTOPOL, CALIFORNIA
OCTOBER 1 - NOVEMBER 7, 1998

text by **SUSAN WOOD-ONSTAD**

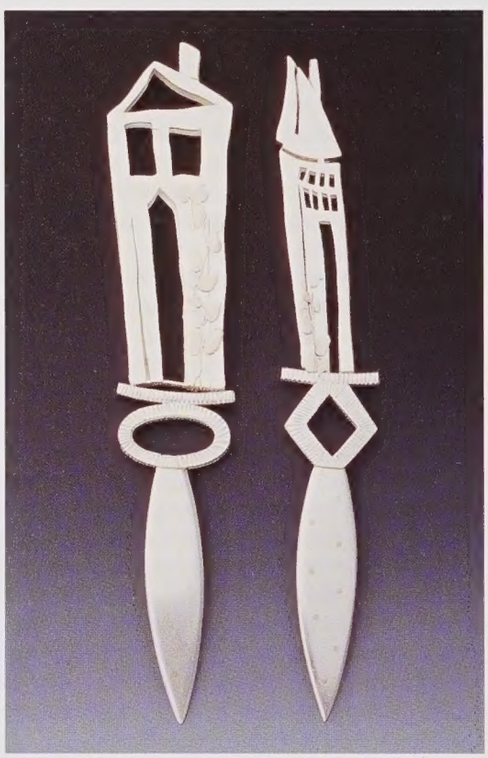
Imagine putting together a time capsule comprised of current metalwork that embodies the full range of expression of contemporary concerns: aesthetic, personal, social, and political. Now imagine stepping into that capsule. The intimate gallery at the Sebastopol Center for the Arts in Sebastopol, California, created just such a space for the metal arts exhibit, *Fin de Siécle*.

Translated, the show's title means "the end of a century, age, or era," and it brings to mind the fervor and excitement that accompanies the 100-year turn of a calendar. But this show also celebrates the turn of the millennium, and the energy and diversity of the pieces shown honors the influence of a thousand years of history along with the possibilities of what is yet to come. Ling Yen Jones, curator, selected sixteen artists to represent the broad spectrum of metals practice. The numerous personal styles and concerns are combined in this microcosm, to reflect the rich diversity of contemporary metals and the multi-faceted roles that metal arts has developed.

The traditional approach to craft as the production of beautifully ornamented functional objects is eloquently represented by Albion Smith. A true craftsman, Smith embraces the challenge to express the human spirit and its reverence for beauty in objects of everyday use. Smith's *Iris Bottle* is an impeccably crafted sterling decanter engraved with irises and embellished with amber, amethysts, and a black pearl. *Lock*, a delicately etched brass and forged steel padlock, reminds one that even the most mundane object, when reinterpreted by someone with a deep respect for his craft, can be transformed.

The ability to transform objects from the mundane to the numinous does not fall outside the bounds of the metalsmith's art. Catherine Richardson's two pieces, *Instinctual Excavation #1 & #2*, underscore the truth that spirit is primitive and eternal, personal and archetypal. These two sphere-shaped, riveted copper vessels, set on wrought iron tripods and decorated with bone, fur, and personal hieroglyphs, have been skillfully transformed from mundane material elements into what could easily be relics excavated from humanity's collective psyche.

In Lelani Norman-Young's portentous *Fooling with Mother Nature*, the future is the issue in question. The piece, a large aluminum egg, is tied to its base with fine steel cables. A hole at one end allows viewers to peer into the interior, which is illuminated when a red button on the base is pushed. Inside are a wishbone and a large diamond ring caricature. Further back is a long, convoluted trail of plastic babies. Toy soldiers line the egg's interior, and strewn across the bottom are test tubes filled with electronic parts and shredded money. A more lighthearted approach to social commentary is Kellen Perlman's *Lucy, Helen*, and *Ethel*, three wall-mounted wooden boxes that employ found objects to illustrate the



time period and nature of each woman's crime. Ethel was convicted in the 1950s of attempted murder when she tried to kill her one-legged husband by overwaxing her kitchen floor. The interior of her box is wall-papered with period ads for homemaking products. Sitting on the highly polished parquet floor is a house shaped cookie cutter with a charm -- a leg -- suspended from its roof.

Theresa Lovering-Brown deftly combines substance and whimsy in her work. *Foundation #1* and *#2* are a set of sterling salad servers. The broad fork and spoon provide stability to the long, linear handles, each of which ends in a stylized, whimsical house. A metaphor for relationships, the houses suggest compatibility rather than sameness. Sharing the same case are Kristina Kada's small sculptures, *Study, Architectural Details*. Kada has captured the experience of a culture through her interpretation of its architecture. These intimate icons, one of an Indonesian hut and the other of a Mediterranean home complete with sterling "wrought iron" gates, are delicately rendered in silver, copper, paper, and brass. Her attention to detail is evident in that parts move, doors open, and the plants "growing" along the building are native to the regions represented.

Although some of the jewelry presented seems tentative, for the most part the jewelry is strong and well thought out. Among the noteworthy pieces are Nicole Richards's *Wing Brooch*, Eric Trabert's *African Sunset* neckpiece, and Ling Yen Jones's *Window of Opportunity II*. Ellen Cheek's *Shipwreck #24H* and her *Brooch and Earring Set* demonstrate the artist's skill and sensitivity to materials. But her skill becomes the foundation for her wit, particularly in the ring titled *Primary Colors*. Short sections of yellow and blue artists' colored pencils are bezel set on a wide-band ring. Across the surface, in small indented areas, Cheek has applied spots of red paint. In her statement, Cheek mentions that the double-entendre relates to the impact that owning an art store has on her work, as well as to some recent political issues.

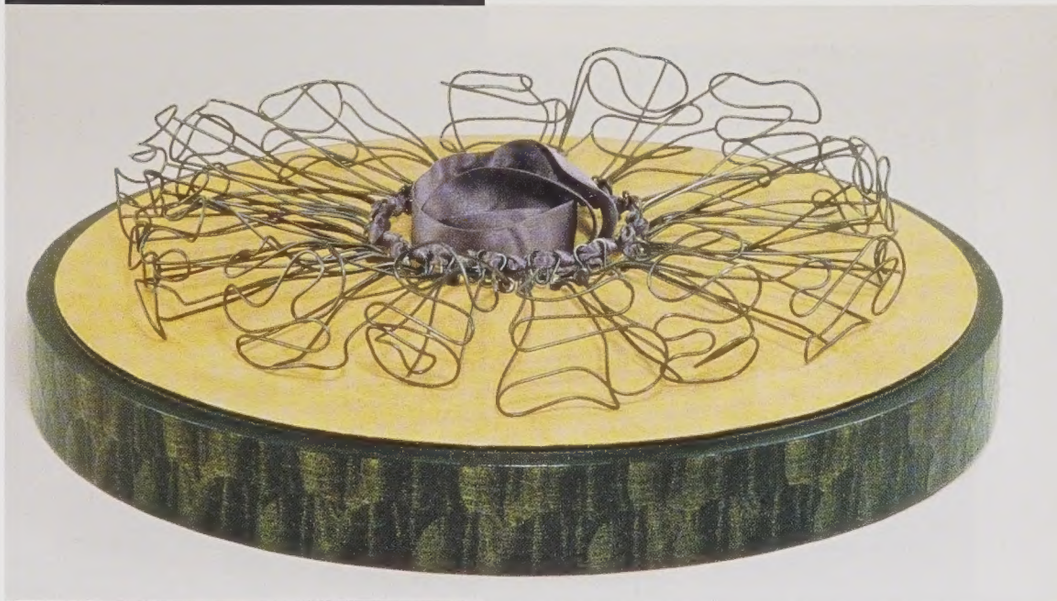
One of the strongest pieces in the show is the collection of brooches, *Women I have Known #1 through #5*. This group of large brooches (4 to 5 inches long, and 1 to 1 1/2 inches wide) is mounted on handmade paper and hung on the wall in a Plexiglas frame. Brooke Battles aptly captures the essence of each personality in metal, stone, bone, and shell. She presents them like a group photograph, frozen in time, with each individual unique yet universally recognizable. *Women...#1* is purposeful and passionate. The figures dark drusy head, with tendrils of sterling hair streaming behind, is perched on a long, obelisk shaped body and her quartz heart draws her forward with intensity. *Women...#5* is serene and contemplative. The subject's head is a spiral shell indicating introspection, and her body is robed in oxidized bronze with a gold-on-silver overlay in the center.

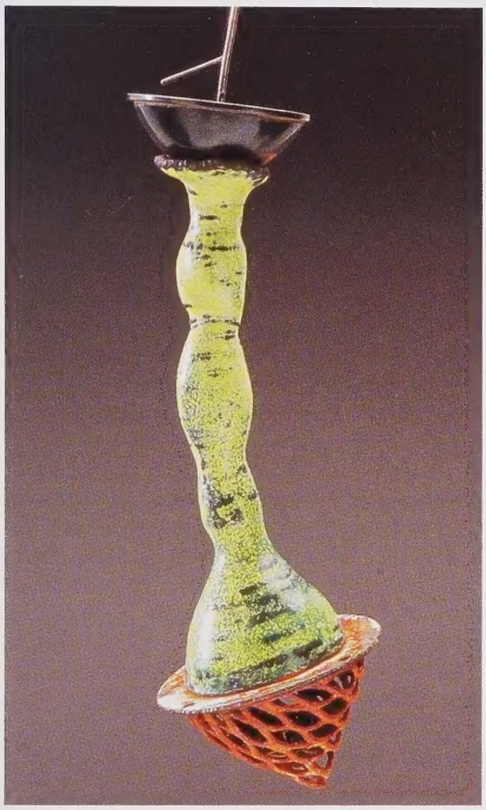
The end of one millennium is also the beginning of the next, and Frederick Miller's bold and dynamic designs give the audience a glimpse of one direction jewelry may take. *Lela's Warrior Cuff*, a sterling silver cuff bracelet, has a finely etched gridwork pattern on the surface, which provides a counterpoint to the bold, asymmetrical cabochons of fossilized palm wood and orange chalcedony. The central portion of the bracelet is a large, geometric, and slightly menacing setting for a citrine. This central setting is removable and becomes a brooch, but surprisingly, its removal does not detract from the strength of the bracelet. *Death Star* (from the *Urban Assault* series) is a square-shaped, hollow-formed sterling ring. On the front of the ring, set along the top and bottom edge is a pair of one-inch-long torpedo shaped carnelian agates. If one were to make a fist while wearing the ring, the points of the stones would protrude past the knuckles: jewelry as weapon?

Initially, one might feel overwhelmed by the number and variety of pieces gathered in such a

small space, but when moving through the exhibition one could come to understand the notion of time and space as a container. This exhibition then, effectively contained and presented the many roles that metal art has played in the past thousand years: functional and ornamental, social statement and political pun, and a vehicle for expressing personal reflections and universal archetypes.

Susan Wood' Onstad is a writer who lives in Mendocino, California.





facing page right
Theresa Lovering-Brown
Open House 2 & 3, 1998
sterling, shibuishi
9 x 1 1/2 x 1/4"

facing page left
Ellen Cheek
In the Beginning: 9B and Magic Rub, 1998
fine silver, sterling, 18k, 9B drawing pencil, Magic Rub eraser

left
Maria Phillips
Reciprocal (pendant) 1999
oxidized sterling, electroformed copper

top
Tina Rath
Flemish Collar with Box (open), 1999
wood, paint paper, silk, steel
Boxes by Suzy Holsinger
Photograph by Lenny Gonzalez

bottom
Nancy Deal
Monocle and case (pendant), 1999
sterling, stainless steel, glass lens
2 1/2 x 1 3/4 x 3/4"

TINA RATH, MARIA PHILLIPS, NANCY DEAL

SUSAN CUMMINS GALLERY
MILL VALLEY, CALIFORNIA
JULY 5 - 31, 1999

text by **HARRIETE ESTEL BERMAN**

Three jewelers at Susan Cummins presented sharply contrasting work, ranging from subdued matte black to shiny silver, from the comparison of modern jewelry as an accessory to the historical precedent of jewelry as an essential element of costume. More significant, work in the show confronted the viewer with the contrast between jewelry *put* in a case and jewelry thoughtfully incorporating its own display.

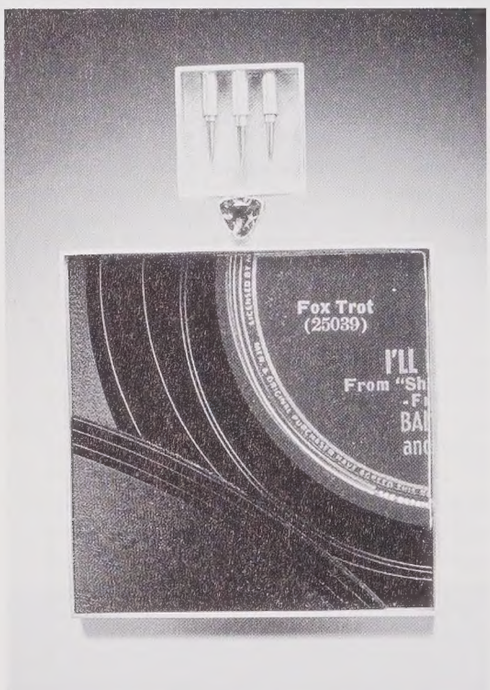
The work of Maria Phillips and Nancy Deal exemplifies modern jewelry as an accessory. Each piece could be worn anytime, anyplace. Phillips's matte black pieces (some with enamel) integrate intimate details, every nuance carefully designed. The forms express a personal vocabulary of shapes inspired by nature. Lengthy chains on *Reciprocal, Hirsute,* and *Linger* adjust using innovative construction to change the pendant style.

Tina Rath's work, on the other hand, proclaims jewelry in a different role than mere accessory. Inspired by costumes from sixteenth and seventeenth century European portraiture, it reflects the same majestic flair -- demanding attention. Wire ruffles, both as necklaces and bracelets, flaunt their presence as conspicuously as the starched collars and flowing cuffs worn by aristocrats of that era. Bracelets of shiny, silver wire outline flowing ruffles as natural as fabric. Making a dramatic statement, a lace-like collar based on a sixteenth-century portrait of Queen Elizabeth is constructed in a twentieth-century style. Calling forth the stature and importance of the noble original, the theatrical aspect of the collar as costume plays a leading role.

As mentioned, the works in the show also confront the difference between jewelry *put* in a case versus jewelry thoughtfully incorporating its own display. Maria Philips's "environments" attach to the wall in a distinctive embodiment of her attention to detail. Some "environments" even hold extra interchangeable elements for spontaneous variations on a pin, such as the pod-like shapes in *Transposition: Brooch with Environment*. Tina Rath's displays bring to mind elegant presentation boxes for important gifts. Most were laminated with overlapping color copies of magnified costume details from the historical portraits that served as their inspiration. Every display, whether in a box, on a wall, or on a platform, affirmed the value and presence of the jewelry within. Nancy Deal's work hung in conventional cases and did not fair as well in comparison. The thoughtful completeness of the Phillips's and Rath's displays were highlights of the show. Unencumbered by the usual jewelry case sarcophagus, their presentations extended each artist's personal vision.

This show focused attention on topics usually ignored in art jewelry, which is typically more concerned with fashion than introspection. Is our role, as jewelers, metalsmiths, and artists, to conform with established parameters of fashion and display, or is it to define personality and presence through artistic intent? Phillips and Rath confront these conventions. Whether for accessory or adornment, their vision of jewelry extends beyond the wearing of a piece. Each in her own memorable and unique way has successfully posed a case for display.

Harriete Estel Berman is a metalsmith who lives in San Mateo, California.



above left
Susan Sloan
Fox Trot, 1996
silver, 14k, nickel, iolite, vinyl record
3 3/8 x 2 1/4"

above right
Marjorie Simon
Brooch, 1997
silver, blasting sand, iron wire, enamel
5 x 1 3/8"

CONTINENTAL DIVIDE
AMERICA HOUSE GALLERY
PIERPONT, NEW YORK
MAY 3 - JUNE 15, 1997

text by **DAVID BUTLER**

The meaning of material in craft is often taken for granted, accepted on an almost intuitive level. In ceramic, one knows the material is a clay that is fragile; but it is also of the damp earth, with its own potential geological resonances. In jewelry, the traditional materials of silver and gold are perceived as valuable metals, cold and unchanging; but because of the extreme heat and hard labor they demand, they, too, can take on a meaning greater than "this stuff is expensive." In other words, all materials have the potential to transcend their intrinsic meanings. In an interesting traveling exhibit of jewelry created by eight different artists at America House Gallery in Pierpont, N.Y., this notion was put to the test.

The concept of the exhibition was to have four artists from the East use materials deemed to be eastern: cement, screen, blasting sand, phonograph records, and rust. Four artists from the West were given rock, feather, leaf, and twig as their indigenous media. Both eastern and western pieces include silver, gold, and stones in the composition. Though much of the work is well-designed and diligently executed, the objects that are most successful allow the materials to transcend their basic meaning. Steuart Bremner's work succeeds most in this. The majority of his exhibited pieces are pins composed of a stick piercing a rock. A simple yet elegant idea, the image serves as a powerful icon illustrating the weak overcoming the strong and immutable. It is a minimalist's vision, uncluttered and direct.

The works of other western participants, Karen Pierce, Danny Saathoff, and Andrew Bugher, use some of the same materials, but with a less potent effect. Bugher's work included some nice pins, for which he uses combinations of wood, rock, and steel. They function well on a formal level of a thoughtfully composed assemblage of materials, yet they don't pack the punch that I would have liked to have seen. Pierce produces pins of patinaed metal in the shape of Egyptian vases, which she inlays with fragments of vinyl record albums in such a way that the inlay becomes obscured. They are attractive objects, but the inlay material has been stripped of its original appearance and thus of potential references. If one did recognize the material, how could one make an intellectual leap and take the work's significance to the next level? If the inlay were more recognizable as a record album, the pieces would have more impact.

There was no mistaking the blue-papered center of the record album in eastern participant Susan Sloan's album pin. With the words "Fox Trot" printed on the label, the phonograph record sets up a nostalgic tableau. In combination with "useless" phonograph needles no longer needed in a compact disc era, a wistful feeling is invoked. With her use of finely finished silver, gold, and faceted iolite, Sloan creates a precious vision of a bygone time. It is a beautiful piece, and exhibits an excellent use of materials.

Another easterner, Keith Lo Bue, also offers a look back at times gone by as well as a peek at the present, with his pieces. In his works with found objects, metaphor is instantly possible. Lo Bue walks that line between chaos and order, and I think he succeeds overall. By using old photographs and albums, as well as faded and rusted-out found objects, he creates a general feeling of degeneration and decay, found in many towns and cities in the Midwest and Northeast.

Diametrically opposed to Lo Bue's vision is Marjorie Simon's well-composed, orderly, and finished work that combines wood, sand, and steel, with silver, pearls, and amethyst to create precious objects, mainly pins and pendants. Simon has elevated the rough and raw to a state of preciousness, transcending the common associations of the material and creating well designed and beautifully executed jewelry.

Of course, the making of any visual art involves dealing with material. In this exhibition, material was emphasized by the romantic and arbitrary division of materials between easterners and westerners, producing good results. There was also a collaborative work in this show that wasn't so successful. The easterners each made a large (approx. 40mm) bead all of which were then gathered and hung on a rubber cord. It was unexciting. If the westerners executed such a collaborative piece, I did not see it. Collaborative work is tough enough when the person you are working with is in the same studio, much less in another state. The limitation of materials was certainly enough of an assignment. Working with a material one is not accustomed to using can be liberating and creative. As this exhibit shows, the resultant work can be exciting

David Butler is a sculptor and jeweler who lives and works in New York, New York.

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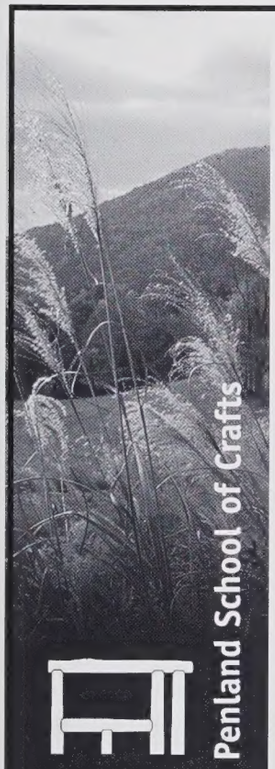

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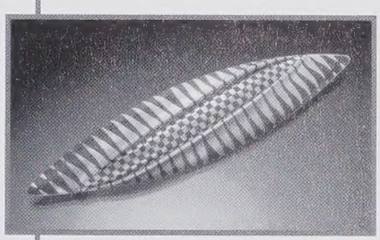

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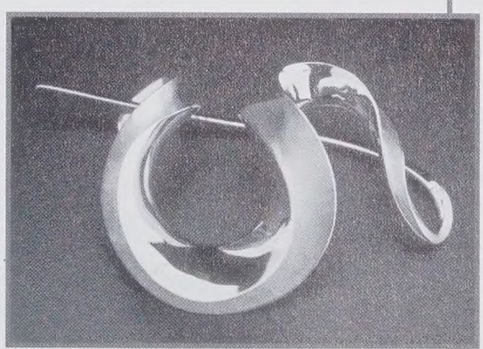

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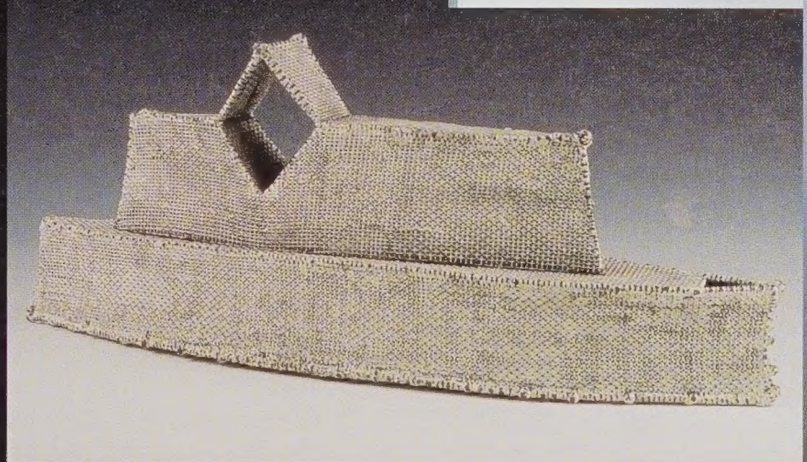

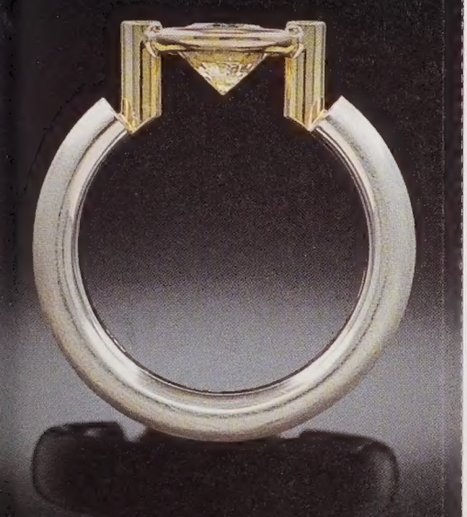

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opposite page, clockwise from top

Chris Y. Smith
Balance Is Too Strenuous (brooch)
silver
4 1/2 x 5 x 1"

Biba Schutz
Circum Pendant, 1996
oxidized bronze and copper, sterling, fine silver
4 1/3 x 1 1/3 x 1 1/3"

(*Metalsmith* Magazine)
Marilyn Da Silva
Harlequin Pair 1, 1998
copper, brass, gold-plate, gesso, colored pencil, squares: 4 x 7 x 3"
diamonds: 5 1/2 x 6 x 3"
photograph by Don Felton

Billie Jean Theide
Butte #EF-8 (teapot), 1997
bronze, electroformed copper, enamel, patina
4 1/4 x 10 x 12 1/2"
photograph by Billie Jean Theide

Whitney Boin
Post Engagement Ring, 1996
produced since 1988
platinum, 18k
photograph by Todd Flashner

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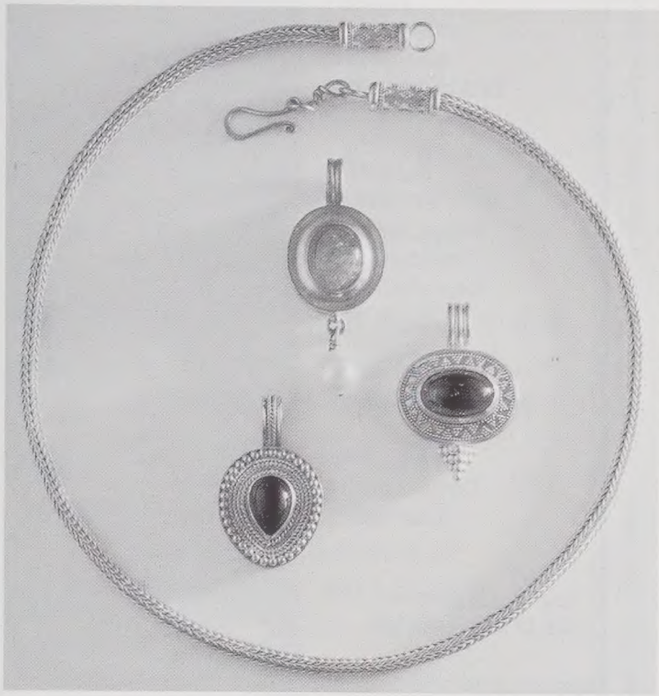

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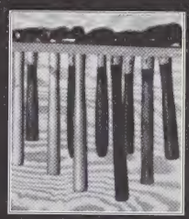

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June 26 - June 30	**Deb Lozier** • Hollow Form Construction
July 10 - July 14	**Susan Wood-Onstad** • Title TBA
July 17 - July 21	**Jennifer Coppel** • Beginning - Intermediate Jewelry Casting
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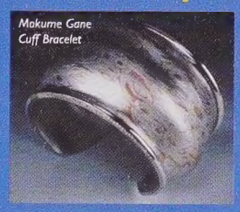

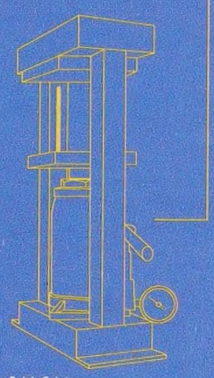

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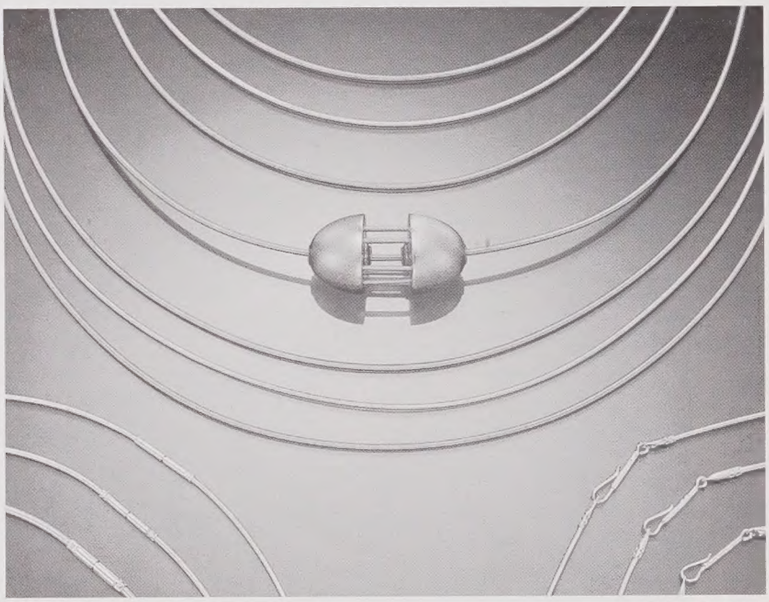

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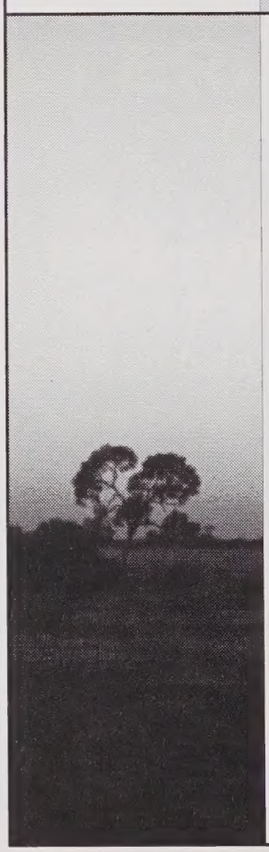

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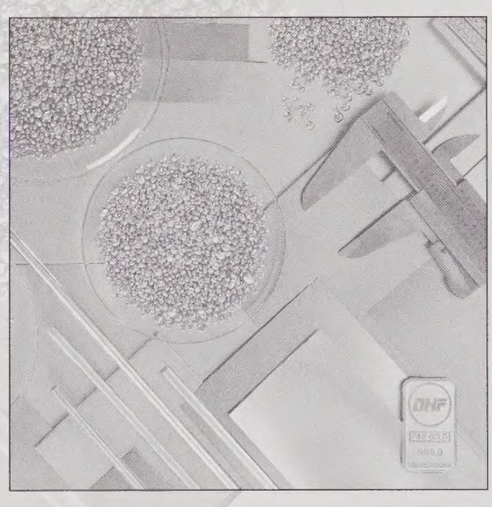

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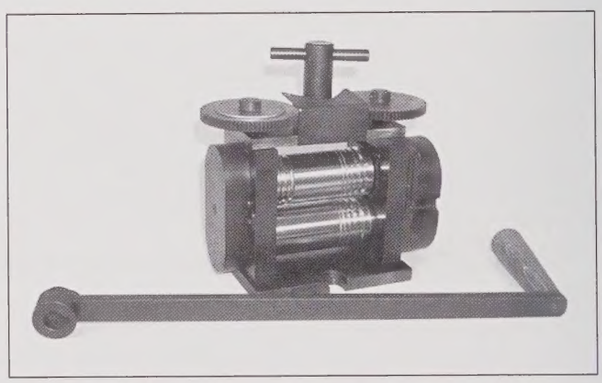

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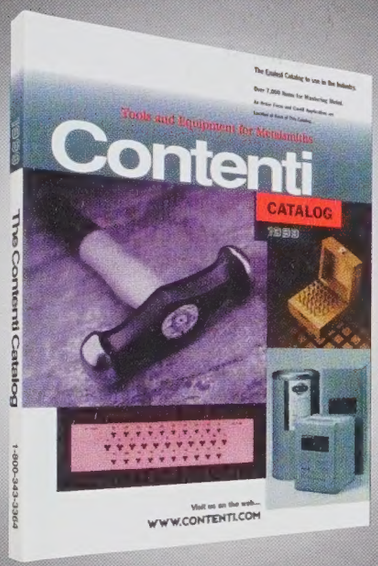

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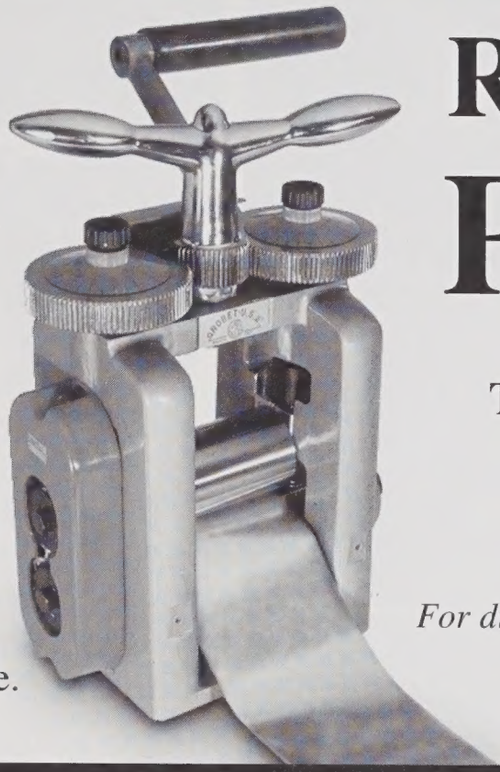

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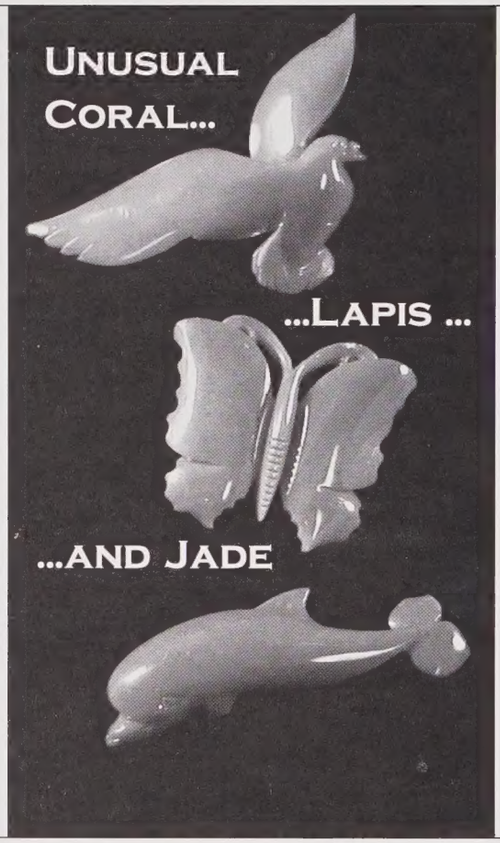

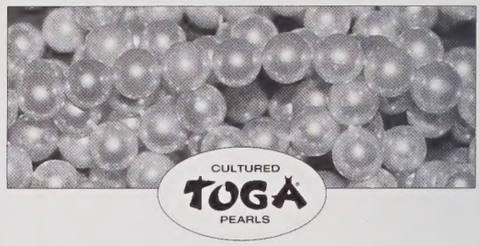

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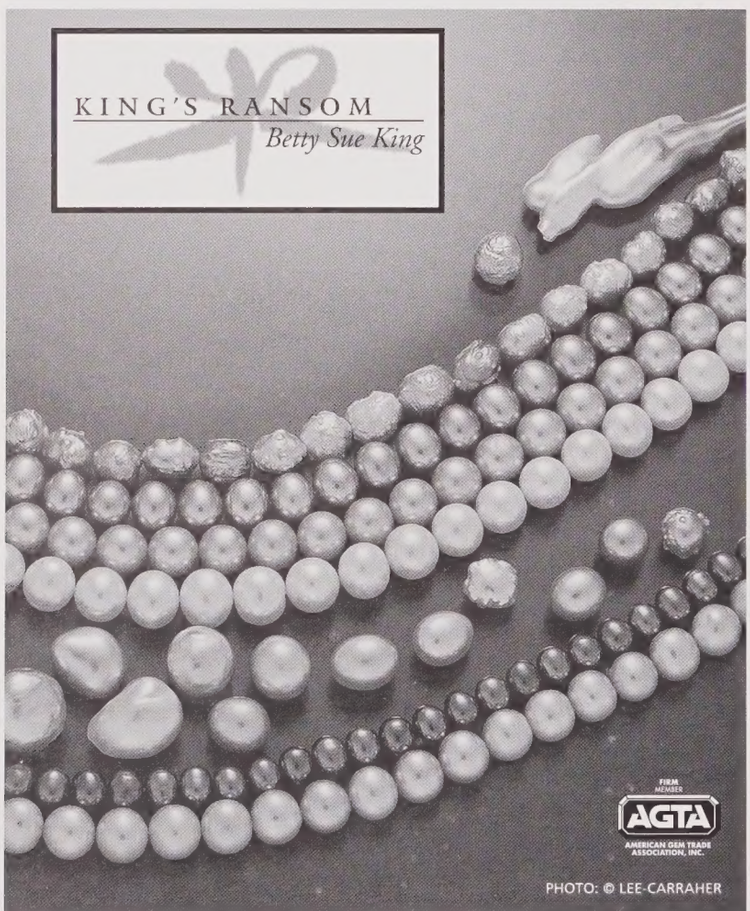

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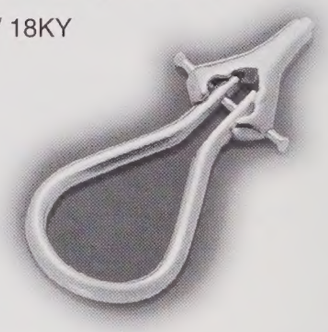

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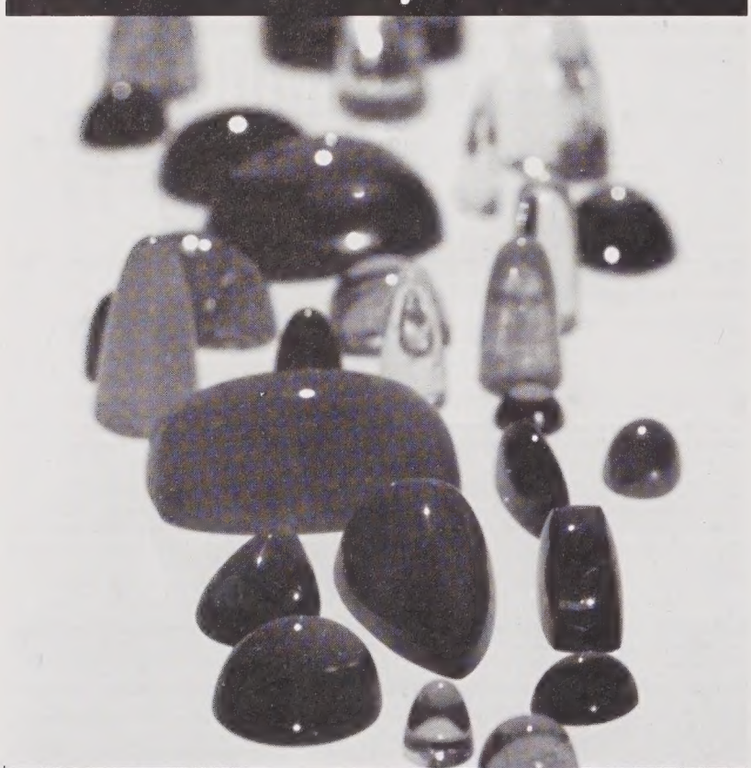

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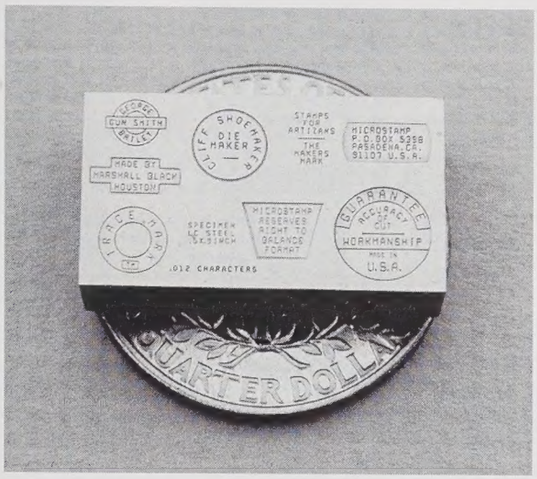

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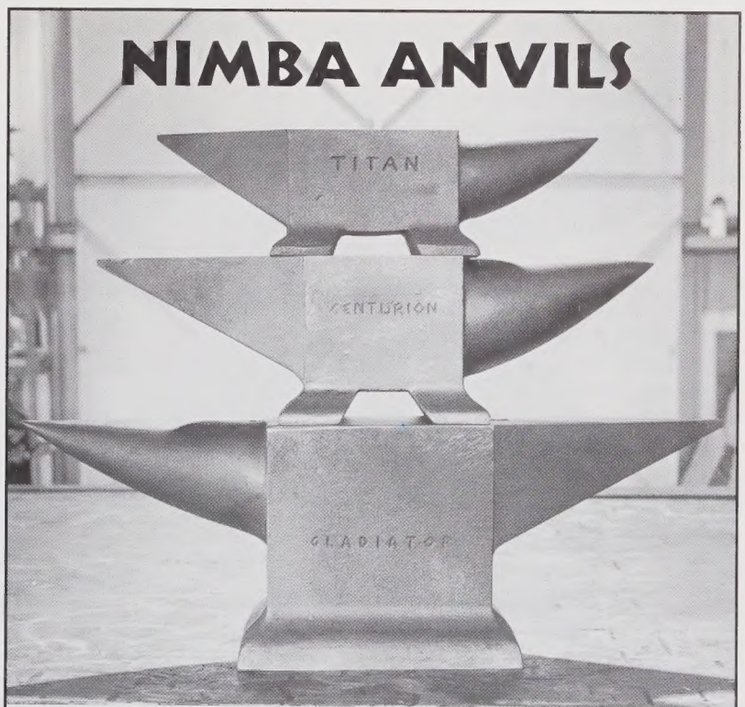

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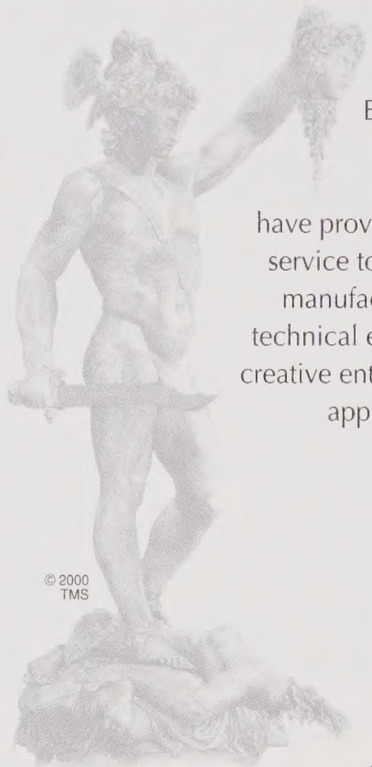

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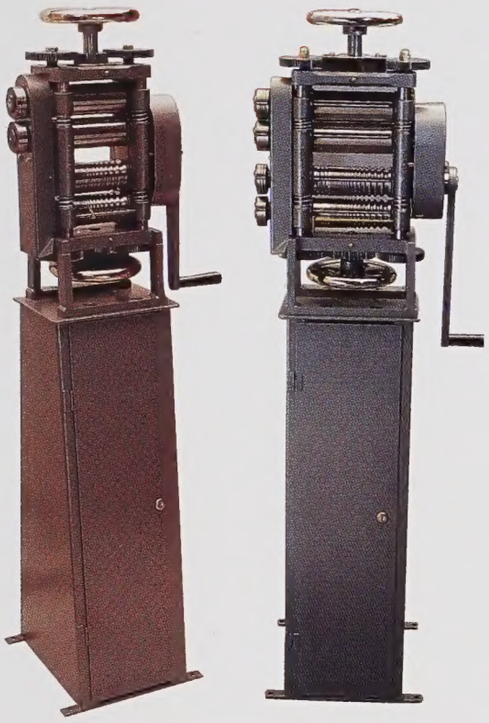

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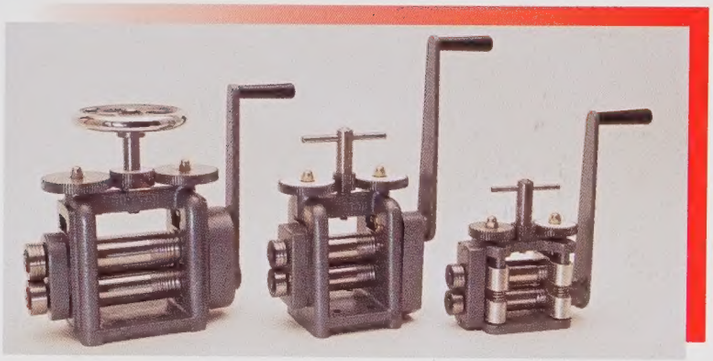

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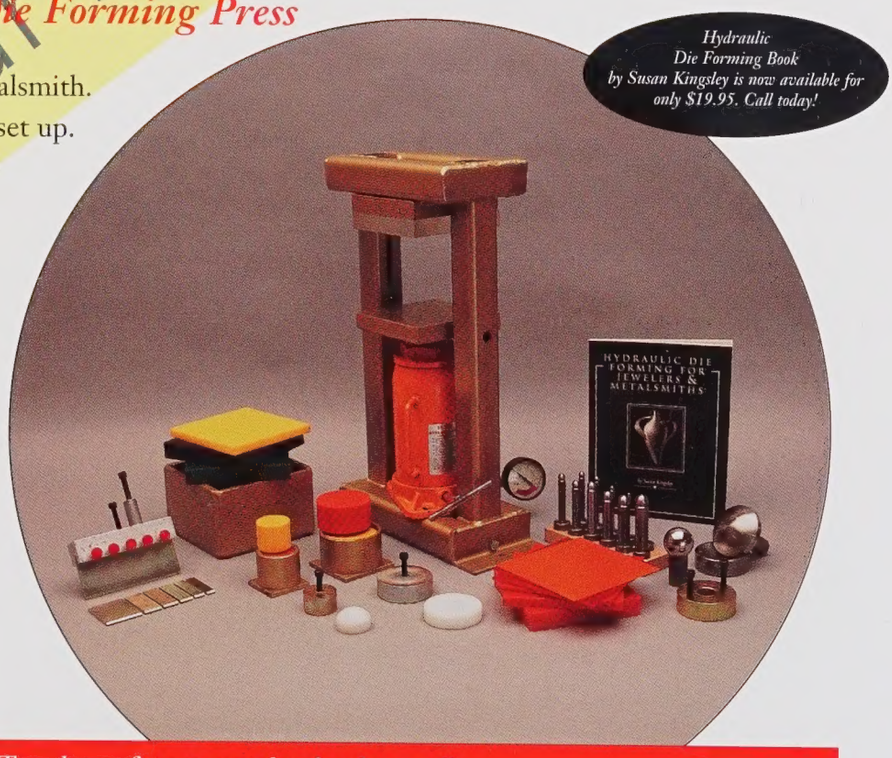

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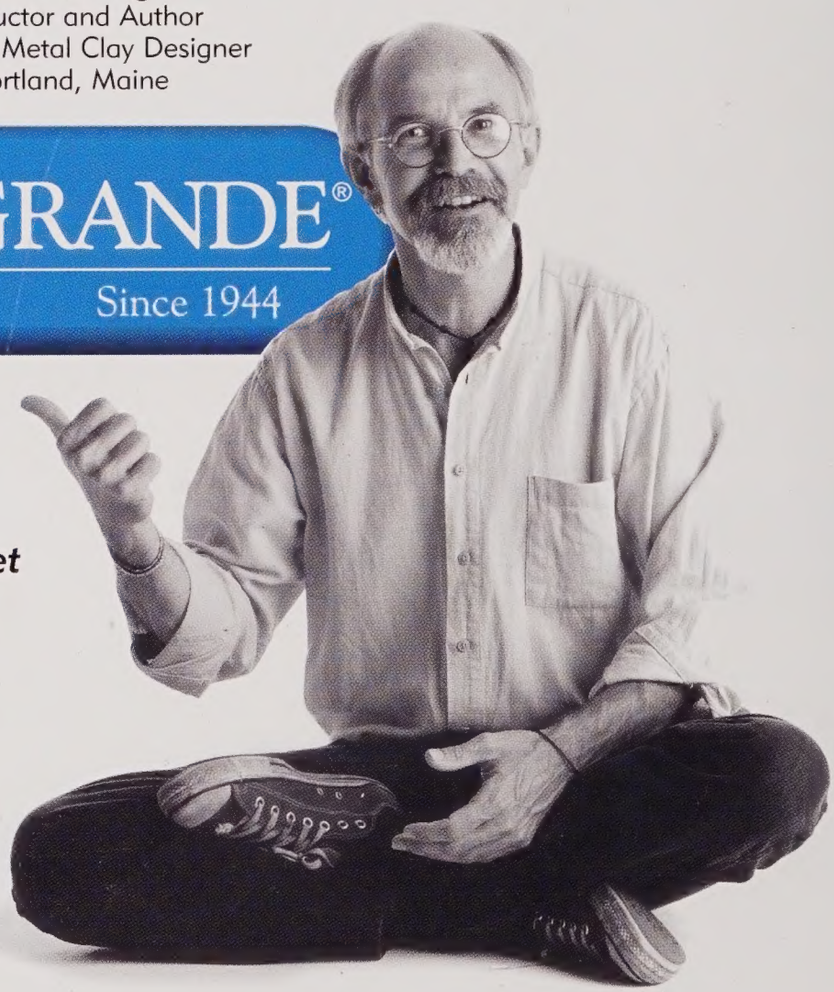

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